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THE

BIOGRAPHY

OF

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

BY

ADOLPHE S. HEADINGLEY.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.

"If there were no opposition to opinion, the world would either turn about with every breath of novelty or stagnate for ever, in a living death."—*Leigh Hunt.*

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE innate respect that all Englishmen bear towards anyone who unmistakeably displays exceptional perseverance, integrity, and courage, is my reason for presenting to the public a biography of Charles Bradlaugh. That he possesses these great qualities, those who read the incidents of his life will scarcely be able to deny. While his opinions must of necessity excite the most energetic opposition in many quarters, there is every reason to hope that all parties will ultimately acknowledge his personal merits. It is these qualities and the varied events of his life that I have attempted to describe; and in the hope that the book may be welcome to friend and foe alike, I have carefully avoided the introduction of controversial dissertations.

Of course, it is notorious that Bradlaugh is in religious questions an Atheist, in social questions a Malthusian, and in politics a Republican. The defence of these views has been the basis of his every action, and it is impossible to lose sight of this fact in writing his biography; but I have refrained from reproducing any of his arguments in favor of these opinions, so that the story of his life may be read by the most timid Christian or the most orthodox victim

of our conventional laws without the least fear. Not that for a moment I would shrink from the discussion of the great and fundamental questions which Bradlaugh has raised, but that in the present instance I am anxious to spread some knowledge concerning the man, rather than his doctrines.

In a separate work these latter might be fitly considered, the reader being fairly warned as to the character of what he is about to read. But in this volume perhaps the greatest service may be rendered to the cause of truth by simply seeking to elicit those feelings of respect which should exist on both sides if any discussion is to be conducted in a dignified manner and brought to a satisfactory issue. Now it is quite evident that England will be called upon, at no distant date, to discuss the opinions which Bradlaugh represents; and therefore it is essential that we should be better acquainted with this new spokesman who has arisen in our midst.

So as not to express merely my own view of the question, it will be found that Mr. Morrison Davidson, in his essays on "Eminent Radicals," remarks that of all roads by which St. Stephen's may be approached, Bradlaugh certainly selected the least likely and the most arduous, and yet he has succeeded. He has taken infinite pains to spoil his own chances. All the great "interests," royalty, aristocracy, church, chapel, and the public-house, have waged war against him, and yet he has surmounted all these obstacles. "This unique position," adds Mr. Davidson, "he has won by his daring, by his intellect, by his titanic energy, and by his general thoroughness

of character. If he is not a real hero, he is a surprisingly clever counterfeit. In his own way, and by his own example, he has inspired many thousands of the most abject of his countrymen with reinvigorated feelings of self-reliance and renewed hope on earth. He has taught them the inestimable lesson of self-help, of righteous indignation against oppression."

By Wendell Phillips and Charles Sumner he has been described as one of the most powerful amongst English orators, and Mr. M. Davidson asserts that, excepting Mr. Gladstone, Bradlaugh has perhaps the most attached personal following of any politician in England. Certainly, the National Secular Society, of which he is the President and principal organiser, possesses eight London and sixty-one provincial branches,[1] not to mention a large number of other bodies who work with, but do not yet form part of, this special association.

When Bradlaugh's seat in the House of Commons was menaced, the efficacy and power of this organisation was conclusively demonstrated by the fact that a few pounds spent in postage sufficed to set all these bodies in motion, and ensured the holding of more than a hundred and forty meetings in his favor during the course of one single evening. On the other hand, when in advertisements, etc., several hundreds of pounds had been expended to convoke only one meeting in Hyde Park against his admission into the House of Commons, barely 400 persons were

[1] There are now twenty-two London and seventy-four provincial branches, besides branches in India, Australia and New Zealand.—Ed. 2nd edition.

present, and out of these a large minority were emphatically in Bradlaugh's favor, while thousands of enthusiastic supporters waited to greet him in Trafalgar Square and Westminster Hall when he was about to claim his seat.

Under these circumstances, it is impossible to deny the importance, as a great political fact, of Bradlaugh's advent to Parliament; and the facts of his life, irrespectively of all party feelings, should be known, if only as a part of contemporary history. To ensure the accuracy of this fragment of the history of our time, I applied to Bradlaugh personally, and from him obtained the greater part of the material that will be found in these pages. By his courtesy and ready assistance, I am enabled to give a considerable amount of information which has not yet been published, and could only have been obtained directly from him.

ADOLPHE S. HEADINGLEY.

London, July, 1880.

PREFATORY NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE First Edition, issued in 1880, having been exhausted, an Appendix, by Mr. W. Mawer, has been added, containing a rough diary of the principal events which have happened between the issuing of the two editions.

June, 1883.

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BIOGRAPHY

OF

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

CHAPTER I.

Birth and School Days—Early Trials—Extraordinary Successes as an Angler—The Awakening of Political Thought—Works as an Errand Boy—Becomes a Sunday School Teacher—Is Started on the Road to Freethought by the Parish Clergyman.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH was born on the 26th of September, 1833, and is, therefore, still in the prime of life. His father was a poor man—in fact, a very poor man—who struggled painfully for existence as a solicitor's clerk, his salary being so small that he was compelled to work at home in the evenings. Fortunately, he had acquired a small reputation for his excellent penmanship, and was able to procure some law writing. It appears, also, that Mr. Bradlaugh, senior, wrote a few sketches, short stories, and articles for the *London Mirror*. These were signed "C. B***h," and must have been published about fifty years ago. They produced, however, but little effect, and did not help to relieve the family from the depressing poverty under which they all labored. Nor were the means forthcoming to supply Charles Bradlaugh with anything better than the most elementary education. At the age of seven he was sent to the National School in Abbey Street, Bethnal Green; then he went to a small private school in the same neighborhood, and when finally he attained the ripe age of eleven, it was considered that his education was complete. The finishing

touch had been given at a boys' school in Coldharbour Street, Hackney Road.

During this period the family had migrated from Bacchus Walk to Bird Cage Walk, where is situated the first house that Bradlaugh remembers. It was a poor man's cottage, but it was surrounded by a garden measuring three-quarters of an acre, which Bradlaugh's father cultivated with great assiduity, for he was extremely fond of flowers—a taste his son has in no wise inherited. Nevertheless, the garden was ultimately abandoned, and the family removed to 13, Warner Place, Hackney, where, for seven shillings a week, they secured one of the new cheap class "Jerry"-built houses, professedly of six rooms, but containing, in reality, only four good rooms. It was in this latter dwelling that Bradlaugh saw the last of his parents, and he seems to cherish none of those softening recollections of home, and the kindness received during early childhood, which extend their soothing influence far beyond the days of youth. Between himself and his father there is, however, one distinct link, and Bradlaugh is fond of recalling this trait of union that has survived the test of many years. The father was passionately fond of fishing, and the son knows no greater relaxation, no keener enjoyment, than angling, nor is there a spot in any county or country that pleases him more than the banks of the Lea, where his father fished before him.

When overwhelmed with work or anxiety, Bradlaugh can put aside every care, if he can only secure time enough to spend a few hours at the water-side. Here he is entirely transformed, not merely by his top-boots and waterproof, but his whole mind is concentrated on the hazard of the sport, and no one would imagine that he had given a thought to politics or theology. His father was wont to get up at three in the morning, and walk as far as the Temple Mill, on the Lea, to secure some fish before business hours. At this spot the waters are free to all comers. In his love for this sport Bradlaugh has not shown less energy; but as a characteristic trait, he cannot, like many anglers, wait for the fish. If the fish will not come to

him, he will go after the fish. He will be seen all over the water, rowing first to one part then to another, till he has discovered the best spot. Every inch of the bank is familiar to him ; but his favorite localities are the Carthagena Weir and the King's Weir. To all the fishermen on the Lea he is well known, but not as a politician. No one could induce him to talk on such subjects while there remained fish in the water.

Perhaps it is to this great concentration of effort that Bradlaugh owes the success which, had he failed in all other respects, would, at least, have made him a renowned angler. He can, in any case, boast of having captured the largest carp which has been taken in England with rod and line. It weighed no less than 14¾lbs. This remarkable fish, stuffed and preserved, is exhibited at the Crown Hotel, Broxbourne Bridge, and by its side there is another case containing three huge bream that weigh over 21lbs. This case has no rival ; for though single fish of greater size have been caught, it would be difficult to find such a trio, and may be considered as a distinct title to pre-eminence in the angling world. At this same hotel may also be seen a trout, weighing 11¾lbs., which Bradlaugh took ; but though this latter capture is remarkable, many other anglers have been equally fortunate.

To return to Bradlaugh's boyhood. It is probable that the first awakening of political thought occurred when he was about ten years old, for he remembers discovering among his father's books a copy of Cobbett's "Political Gridiron," which he was able partially to understand, and, in any case, he read it with some avidity. In those days the Chartist agitation was stirring the country, and did not fail to excite the minds of mere boys. Perhaps Bradlaugh's first political act —it was done after much hesitation, and with great trepidation—was to enter a chandler's shop and purchase a halfpenny copy of the "Charter." But the reading of this celebrated document did not at first produce any very deep impression, and the boy rapidly returned to his favorite games. These consisted principally of theatricals, enacted with paper dolls, and, as a halfpenny sheet gave all the characters of "The

Miller and his Men," this became the most popular play. Sometimes this game was varied by a sham fight. Tin soldiers were, of course, too expensive, and consequently altogether out of the question ; but, with boyish ingenuity, young Bradlaugh collected all the old steel nibs he could find. Stuck in a wooden table, and standing proudly erect, the larger pens represented the cavalry and the smaller ones the infantry, while paper pellets, as cannon balls, wrought destruction amid these ironside regiments.

But little time, however, was allowed for these childish battles ; the real struggle of life was soon to begin. Bradlaugh was only twelve years old when he was called upon to work for his living. He was appointed to the high dignity and emoluments of errand boy in the solicitor's office where his father toiled during all his life. More than two years elapsed before anything better was found for the youth, who, it was easy to discover, possessed exceptional ability. He was fourteen years old when he became wharf clerk and cashier to a firm of coal merchants in Britannia Fields, City Road. Simultaneously with his promotion the Chartist movement developed itself, and assumed formidable proportions. Joining the general current—and, at first, from mere idle curiosity—Bradlaugh attended various open-air meetings held in his neighborhood. The acuteness of the crisis, the ardor of some of the speakers, inspired him with serious thoughts, awakened a consciousness of his own ignorance, and gave him the ambition and the courage to study and read whenever he had a leisure moment. At the same time he attended the Church of England regularly with his parents. So earnest and devoted did he seem that he was chosen as one of the Sunday School teachers, and Bradlaugh was gradually developing into manhood in a most orthodox and conventional manner, when an untoward circumstance occurred which at one blow changed the whole tenor of his life.

The Bishop of London announced that he was about to hold a confirmation in Bethnal Green. The Rev. John Graham Packer, the incumbent of St. Peter's, Hackney Road, the district where Bradlaugh lived,

thereupon determined to distinguish himself. He resolved to select a few of the ablest boys from his class and invite the Bishop to question them himself, so as to demonstrate the special care he had taken in teaching his parishioners all that concerned this solemn event. Of course Bradlaugh was signalled out as among the most promising pupils, and urged to prepare for confirmation. With the greatest alacrity, and only anxious to do what was right, Bradlaugh at once studied the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England and the four Gospels; but these, unfortunately, he examined so carefully that he found they differed. No sooner was he convinced of this fact than he forthwith, and very naturally, wrote to the Rev. Mr. Packer, respectfully soliciting his aid and some explanation.

It has often been shown how the greatest events result from the most trifling circumstances. The Duchess of Marlborough is stated to have lost her temper, quarrelled with Queen Anne, and even struck her sovereign patroness because she was put out by an indisposition resulting from eating sauerkraut. This dish of sauerkraut, therefore, became the cause of the Duke of Marlborough's disgrace, and when he lost his influence at Court, England lost all the advantages gained by his great victories, and recorded in the Treaty of Utrecht. Without seeking to establish a comparison between Bradlaugh and the Duke of Marlborough, which would be obviously absurd, it may be said that had the Rev. Mr. Packer shown a little more self-control and discretion, Bradlaugh might never have been a Freethinker, and the thousands of persons whose opinions were changed through his influence might have remained Christians to this day.

The incumbent of St. Peter's seems, however, to have lost his temper when he discovered that his pupil ventured to criticise and compare what is generally taken for granted. Instead of bringing his superior learning and education to bear on the elucidation of the problems suggested by Bradlaugh, he wrote to his parents denouncing the inquiries of their son as Atheistical, and further suspended him for three months from his

office as Sunday school teacher. At that time, Bradlaugh would have shuddered at the mere suggestion of becoming an Atheist, but his spiritual pastor evidently failed to understand that

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> * * * than in half the creeds."

In disgrace, and reluctant to put in an appearance at Church when he had been driven away from Sunday school, Bradlaugh found time to attend the meetings held in Bonner's Fields, where the Hospital for the Diseases of the Chest now stands. These gatherings were composed of groups varying in number from fifty to five hundred. Little hillocks, or accumulations of rubbish, were used as platforms, and a variety of social, political, and theological subjects were discussed. In the centre of one group some energetic speaker might be found explaining that all human ills were due solely to the prevalence of intemperance. A larger crowd would surround the expounders of the five points of the Charter, while others equally earnest would join in religious discussions. It was in this heterogeneous crowd that Bradlaugh found solace for the injury, not to say the insult, he had received. Needless to add that the anger of his parish clergyman increased rather than dispelled his perplexities, and on Bonner's Fields there were many speakers who brought new and powerful arguments to confirm the doubts which had spontaneously arisen in Bradlaugh's mind. Nevertheless, when he first took part in these discussions, he fought in favor of orthodox Christian doctrines. The more often he debated, however, the greater the number of tenets, essential to the old faith, which had to be abandoned; and the final blow was struck when, in 1849, Bradlaugh was induced to engage in a public discussion at the Warner Place Hall, with Mr. J. Savage, on the "Inspiration of the Bible." After this, to him, memorable struggle, Bradlaugh was obliged to confess that he could not hold out any longer. Frankly recognising that he was beaten, he soon proclaimed himself a Freethinker.

In politics, Bradlaugh was little more than a specta-

tor, though on one occasion, in 1848, he ventured to speak at the meeting which concluded with a free fight with the police, and the arrest of Ernest Jones. At last matters came to a grand crisis. In the winter of 1849, Bradlaugh again ventured to approach the Rev. Mr. Packer, and submitted to him Robert Taylor's "Diegesis," informing him, at the same time, that he had become a teetotaller, an act which the reverend gentleman considered still further demonstrated the infidel tendencies of his former pupil.

The experience of the past had failed to show this reverend gentleman that persuasion and argument, rather than hostile demonstrations, were most likely to influence a dauntless and independent character. The Rev. Mr. Packer, determined, on the contrary, to strike a hard blow just at the moment when tact and gentleness alone were likely to win Bradlaugh back to his fold. Mr. Packer, however, did not understand his mission as one of peace, gentleness, and loving kindness. He relied, in preference, on threats and a demonstration of force. After consulting with his father, he informed Bradlaugh that his employers gave him three days to "change his opinions, or lose his situation." Thus, early in life, Bradlaugh found himself face to face with this trying temptation—the loss of position or the abandonment of opinions which he could not help entertaining, and against which he had fairly and honestly struggled. For it should always be borne in mind that Bradlaugh was originally a public advocate of Christianity, that his doubts sprang up spontaneously as the result of fair and open argument, and that it was against his every interest, and, with the prospect of starvation staring him in the face, that he abandoned the old faith to which he could no longer honestly subscribe. Probably neither his father, his employers, or his clerical persecutor realised the depth of his feelings, the earnestness of his character and convictions.

Bradlaugh, looking back at these circumstances with the calmer reflexion which years bring, is now inclined to think that the threat would probably have never been enforced. It was, doubtless, used only to terrify

him into submission. Other and wiser men than a mere parish clergyman have adopted this policy, which is, indeed, at the foundation of all the religious persecutions that have distressed humanity and retarded progress. But when threats are used on one side, resistance is generally forthcoming on the other, and Bradlaugh, even at that age, was the last person to recant his expressed opinions merely out of fear for the consequences they might entail, His decision was prompt. Finding that every one was in league against him, he determined to leave home, and fight the battle of life unaided but independently.

CHAPTER II.

Bradlaugh as a Coal Dealer—The Taint of the Infidel—Seeks Fortune in Braces—The Boy Orator—Poetic Effusions—The First Pamphlet—Poverty and Love—Debt and Despair—"A Borrowed Man"—Private Bradlaugh of the Dragoon Guards.

BRADLAUGH was barely seventeen years old when he found himself alone in the streets of London, with no money and hardly any clothes. Few youths would have dared to face the world with such slender resources, but events proved that after all he was not quite friendless. In any case, he had made himself known at several public meetings, and having left his home because he differed with the opinions there entertained, he naturally sought out those casual acquaintances whose views harmonised with his own, and found in Mr. B. B. Jones a true friend. He was a well-known old Chartist, whose means were more limited than his kindness, for when he heard Bradlaugh's story he did not hesitate to offer him hospitality for a week. This was sufficient time to organise a plan of action, and, as Bradlaugh had acquired some knowledge of the coal trade, he determined to become a coal merchant, and he forthwith had some cards printed to that effect. His first attempts were not, however, of a very fruitful description. Without credit or capital a business is not easily created. Nor was this all. When Bradlaugh, by dint of perseverance, had secured an order, he was obliged to ask the purchaser to pay for his coals before he had received them. No one would deliver coals on the mere recommendation of an unknown and penniless boy. Yet, in spite of all these difficulties, he did secure a few orders, though the necessity of demanding payment in advance made it a very limited business.

From one source of anxiety Bradlaugh was, however, spared. His parents did not institute any pursuit, and it has since occurred to him that perhaps after all his father was not so much opposed to his views as he seemed to be. Finding he was not molested by his parents, Bradlaugh, on one day of exaltation after the receipt of an order for coals, waited till dusk set in, and then pushed one of his cards under his father's door. This display of malice probably accounts for the fact that efforts were not made to discover his whereabouts. Mr. Bradlaugh, senior, would scarcely have allowed his son, in spite of his views, to starve; but when he found that he proudly styled himself a "coal merchant" he was doubtless glad to let the boy have his own way, and not sorry either, that a compromising cause of religious discord was removed from his home.

Bradlaugh's principal customer was the good-natured wife of a baker, whose shop was situated at the corner of Goldsmith's Road. As she required several tons of coal per week to bake the bread, the commission on this transaction amounted to about ten shillings a week, and this constituted the principal source of Bradlaugh's income. The spirit of persecution, however, was abroad. Some kind friend considerately informed the baker's wife that Bradlaugh was in the habit of attending meetings of Secularists and Freethinkers, where he had been known to express very unorthodox opinions. This was a severe blow to the good lady. She had always felt great commiseration for Bradlaugh's forlorn condition, and a certain pride in herself for helping him in his distress. When, therefore, he called again for orders she exclaimed at once, but still with her wonted familiarity—

"Charles, I hear you are an Infidel!"

At that time Bradlaugh was not quite sure whether he was an Infidel or not; but he instinctively foresaw that the question addressed him might interfere with the smooth and even course of his business; he therefore deftly sought to avoid the difficulty by somewhat exaggerating the importance of the latest fluctuation in the coal market.

The stratagem was of no avail. His kind but painfully orthodox customer again returned to the charge, and then Bradlaugh had to fall back upon the difficulty of defining the meaning of the word Infidel, in which line of argument he evidently failed to produce a favorable impression. Again and again he tried to revert to the more congenial subject of a reduction in the price of coals, and when, finally, he pressed hard for the usual order, the interview was brought to a close by the baker's wife. She declared in accents of firm conviction, which have never been forgotten, that she could not think of having any more coals from an Infidel.

"I should be afraid that my bread would smell of brimstone," she added with a shudder.

This was a death blow to Bradlaugh's business, though for about nine months he struggled against terrible odds. Finding that it was almost impossible to sell coals without possessing at least a little capital, he sought fortune in another direction. Mr. T. J. Barnes, of Goswell Road, started a manufacture of buckskin braces, and offered him a commission on the sale of these somewhat luxurious articles of dress. When Bradlaugh called in the morning to fetch the samples, Mr. Barnes gave him some breakfast; when he brought them back in the evening, his kind employer gave him some dinner. Between these two important periods of the day Bradlaugh strove hard to sell the braces, but seems to have been signally unsuccessful. Probably the braces were only given to him as an excuse, as a delicate way of helping him in his distress; and, though Bradlaugh was fervently convinced that he was rendering considerable service to the business, Mr. Barnes doubtless looked upon the transaction as one that enabled him to assist a victim of religious intolerance.

While struggling in the day time for the means of existence, Bradlaugh devoted the evenings and the Sundays to discussions and meetings. He had found a home at the Warner Place Temperance Hall, near the Hackney Road. Here he lived with the widow and daughters of Richard Carlile, and naturally atten-

ded at the meetings held in the Hall. On other occasions he would speak in the small Hall in Philpot Street, or at the open air meetings in Bonner's Fields. From the very first he was always a fluent speaker, and it was not long before hundreds of persons congregated on Sunday afternoons to hear the boy orator. At that time his views were Deistical, but they were rapidly tending towards the extreme phase which has rendered Bradlaugh's advancement a matter of such great difficulty. He also took part in the agitation in favor of the Poles and the Hungarians, and tried to write on these subjects. With the overweening confidence of youth, he even imagined that he was capable of writing verse. His great delight was to conclude a speech with a stanza of his own composition. These little poems were generally devoted to the laudation of Mazzini or Kossuth, and on one occasion some of these verses were printed on a fly sheet of paper. They are now, however, scattered and out of print, much to Bradlaugh's satisfaction.

His successes as a speaker extended his range of acquaintances, and it was at this early date that he first met Mr. Austin Holyoake, who afterwards became one of his most intimate friends and co-workers. He introduced Bradlaugh to the John Street Institution, and this was soon to be followed by other successes, for Bradlaugh not only wrote, but succeeded in obtaining the publication of his first pamphlet, entitled : "A Few Words on the Christian's Creed." Nor was this all ; the pamphlet caused some sensation, as it was honored by a leading article in the *British Banner*, on which occasion Dr. Campbell violently denounced the various lectures Bradlaugh had delivered.

All this popularity, though so pleasing in itself, failed to bring grist to the mill. It is true that Mrs. Carlile still allowed Bradlaugh to share with her children, Hypatia, Theophila, and Julian, such poor comforts as were at her disposal ; but these were very slender indeed. There was, strange to relate, an extraordinary predominance of rice at their meals ; but there was better cheer when Mr. Harvey came to teach the family French, and invited himself to dinner.

These occasions were always associated in Bradlaugh's mind with the joyful presence of a joint on the table. Mr. Harvey was a philanthropist who not only held very advanced opinions, but possessed some means of his own. This rare and most fortuitous combination enabled him to help a great many people with whom he sympathised, and first among these he singled out the family of Richard Carlile, a man for whom he had naturally borne the profoundest respect. He consequently gave his children gratuitous lessons in French, and on those days there was a good dinner in the bargain, for which, under the pretext that he had invited himself, Mr. Harvey probably provided the *pièce de résistance.*

Nor was French the only subject studied. Bradlaugh, in any case, did not lose a moment. When he was not lecturing or seeking to sell coals or braces, he was engaged preparing himself for discussion by studying Hebrew, Greek, and other tongues, or, it should be added, in making love to Miss Hypatia Carlile. Being proud, penniless, awkward in his manner, over-grown in his limbs, inelegant in his dress, he naturally, and with the unreasoning impulsiveness of youth, added to his other troubles that of falling hopelessly in love. Fortunately, considering the state of affairs, his affection was not returned, and Bradlaugh sighed in vain. To accentuate his distress, the grip of poverty became more and more intense, and with it Bradlaugh's pride rose to an exaggerated pitch.

The Freethinkers, who admired his ability and sympathised with his trouble, organised a subscription on his behalf; and this, far from pleasing, profoundly humiliated him. It made him realise more forcibly his own poverty; and then the matter was complicated with the bitterness of owing money that he could not pay. His debts were not large; his many friends were too poor to lend much, even had he been willing to accept their help, but the exceptional difficulties of the moment had compelled him to borrow, in all, the—to him—terrific sum of £4 15s.!

Evidently the time had come for taking a decided step. On a Monday morning, in December, 1850, Brad-

laugh quietly went out, leaving his good friends without any farewell scene, not knowing exactly what to do, but firmly resolved to put an end to a crisis which had already been prolonged beyond endurance. He strolled from street to street, turning his steps instinctively towards the west, till at last he found himself at Charing Cross. Here a large poster attracted his gaze. It announced that smart young men were required for the East India Service, and a bounty of £6 10s. was offered. This sum would amply suffice to pay all his debts, and perhaps in the East Indies there would be better opportunities for him to carve out his way to fortune, or at least independence.

A moment's reflexion sufficed to convince him that there was no better opening available. With a firm step, resolutely and soberly, Bradlaugh went down some steps to a bar where the recruiting sergeants were in the habit of congregating. Here he discerned the very fat, beery, but honest sergeant, who was then enlisting for the East India Service, and at once volunteered. Bradlaugh little imagined, when he stepped out of the cellar and crossed Trafalgar Square once more—this time with the fatal shilling in his pocket—that after all he would never go to the East Indies, but remain in England to gather around him vast multitudes of enthusiastic partisans, who, on that very spot, would insist on his taking his seat in Parliament as the member for Northampton; and this, too, in spite of those heterodox views which, as yet, had debarred him from earning even the most modest livelihood.

It happened, however, that the sergeant of the East India Company had "borrowed a man" from the sergeant of the 50th Foot, and he determined honestly to pay back his debt with the person of Bradlaugh; so that, after some hocus-pocus transactions between the two sergeants, Bradlaugh was surprised to find that he had been duly enrolled in the 50th Foot, and was destined for home service. Such a trick might have been played with impunity on some ignorant country yokel; but Bradlaugh at once rebelled, and made matters very uncomfortable for all persons concerned.

Among other persons to whom he explained all his grievances was the medical officer who examined him. This gentleman fortunately took considerable interest in the case, and had a long chat with Bradlaugh. He could not engage him for India, as he belonged to the home forces, but he invited him to look out of the window, where the sergeants were pacing about, and select the regiment he might prefer. As a matter of fact, Bradlaugh was not particularly disappointed at being compelled to remain in England ; he objected principally to the lack of respect implied in trifling with his professed intentions. He was, therefore, willing to accept the compromise suggested by the physician. So long as his right of choice was respected, it did not much matter to him in which regiment he served.

After watching for a little while the soldiers pacing in front of the window, his choice fell on a very smart cavalry man, and being of the necessary height, he determined to join his corps. It proved to be the 7th Dragoon Guards ; and with the assistance of the doctor, who supported his claim, Bradlaugh was finally enrolled in this well-known regiment.

Thus Bradlaugh's career as a coal merchant was brought to a close. He left the circle in which he had struggled so arduously, after paying every debt he owed, his mind a little embittered by the failure of his endeavors, but strong in the consciousness of his fearless honesty of purpose, satisfied that no dread of loss, of poverty, of hardship, had ever made him deny any of his opinions. He might be mistaken ; his lectures, his doctrines, might prove injurious to himself and the community at large ; but in any case he had always fought for what he believed to be right and true. He was not guilty of "trimming" to meet the exigencies of his position ; he could not be suspected of hypocrisy. All he had done was diametrically opposed to his material interests ; and if he had failed to earn his living, it was because he had devoted himself too much to public work which he conceived to be for the public good. Doubtless the excitement and gratification of success as a public speaker incited him to a great

extent; but the applause would have been more general, and the prospect of deriving some material benefit from his public action infinitely greater, had he adopted other views than those of a poverty-stricken and ill-considered minority.

The Secular party, which was then forming itself, has since assumed formidable proportions; but in those days it was about the weakest sect to which anyone, actuated by political ambition, could attach himself. It was only those who were inspired by the highest sense of duty who would venture to incur the opprobrium of joining this unpopular body; nor is it just to pass by, too lightly, the early efforts of the pioneers, who are still considered by the majority of their fellow-countrymen as the advocates of mischievous and erroneous heresies. If the Secularists are mistaken, their errors will not be demonstrated by denying the honesty of their convictions, and the disinterestedness of their acts.

CHAPTER III.

Bradlaugh's Luggage—A Storm at Sea—Boarding the Captain—A Ministering Angel Rebuked—Military Trials—Bradlaugh's Knock-down Blow—"Leaves"—Temperance Advocacy—A Sermon Suppressed—Defence of the Right of Way.

THE first experiences of a recruit are rarely pleasant, and to a man of Bradlaugh's disposition they were more particularly vexatious. He found that his fellow recruits were a rough uncouth set of men, among whom he seemed altogether out of place. The troop was at once ordered off to Dublin to join their regiment, and was marched down to a ship lying in the Thames, which was to sail all the way to Ireland. Bradlaugh was the only recruit who wore a black suit and a silk hat. The former was very threadbare, and the latter weak about the rim, but still, to the other recruits, he seemed absurdly attired, and as he looked pale and thin and ill-conditioned, it was not long before some one ventured to destroy the dignity of his appearance by bonneting him. The silk hat thus disposed of, much to the amusement of the recruits, who considered horse-play the equivalent of wit, a raid was made on Bradlaugh's baggage. His box was ruthlessly broken open, and when it was discovered that a Greek lexicon and an Arabic vocabulary were the principal objects he had thought fit to bring to the regiment, the scorn and derision of his fellow soldiers knew no bounds.

A wild game of football was at once organized with the lexicon, and it came out of the scuffle torn and unmanageable. The Arabic vocabulary was a smaller volume, and it fared better. Ultimately Bradlaugh recovered the book, and he keeps it still on his shelf, close to his desk; a cherished and useful relic of past struggles and endeavors. Bradlaugh, there is no doubt,

should have fought in defence of his rights of property, but in those days he could have defended himself better with his tongue than with his fists, and further, to add to the weakness of his position and the dejection of his spirits, he soon began to feel the qualms of sea-sickness.

Probably no one on board was looked upon with more contempt by some, and more commiseration by others, than Bradlaugh as he lent wearily over the side of the vessel, and "poured his sorrows to the ocean." His luggage broken open, his books scattered to the winds, his hat desecrated and ludicrously misshaped by the rough hands of his fellow recruits, Bradlaugh certainly did not present the picture of a future leader of men. Yet, even at this early stage in his military life, an opportunity soon occurred which turned the tables entirely in his favor.

The weather had been looking "ugly" for some time, and now became more and more menacing, till at last a storm broke upon the ship with a violence so intense that the captain feared for her safety. It was absolutely necessary to move the cargo, and his crew were not numerous enough to accomplish, unaided, so arduous a task. Their services also were urgently required to manœvre the ship. The captain, therefore, summoned the recruits to help, and promised that if they removed the cargo, as he indicated, he would give them £5 to share among themselves. He further encouraged them by expressing his hope that if the work were well and promptly done, the ship would pull through the storm.

The proposition was greeted with cheers, and Bradlaugh, in spite of his sea-sickness, helped, as far as he was able, in moving the cargo. The ship now rode the waves more easily, and in due time the storm subsided; and, the danger over, the soldiers thought the hour of reckoning was at hand. The recruits began to enquire about the £5 which had been offered as the reward of their gallant services; but, with the disappearance of the danger, the captain's generosity had considerably subsided. He then hit on a mean stratagem to avoid the fulfilment of his promise. He

singled out three or four of the leading men, the strongest recruits, and gave them two half-crowns each, calculating that if the strongest had a little more than their share, they would silence the clamors of the weaker, who were altogether deprived of their due.

The captain had not, however, reckoned on the presence of Bradlaugh. The pale, awkward youth, who as yet had only been treated with jeers and contempt, was the only person who dared stand up and face him. To the unutterable surprise of every one, he delivered a fiery, menacing, unanswerable harangue, upbraiding the captain in no measured terms, exposing in lucid language the meanness of his action, and concluding with the appalling threat of a letter to the *Times*. To this day Bradlaugh remembers, with no small sense of self-satisfaction, the utter and speechless amazement of the captain at the sight of a person so miserable in appearance suddenly becoming so formidable in speech and menace.

Awakened, therefore, to a consciousness of his own iniquity by Bradlaugh's eloquence, the captain distributed more money. The soldiers, on their side, at once formed a very different opinion of their companion, and, from being the butt, he became the hero of the troop. Every one was anxious to show him some sort of deference, and to make some acknowledgment for the services he had rendered. During the removal of the cargo the soldiers had not failed to steal a few trifles that fell out of the bags and cases, and they were, consequently, able to ply Bradlaugh with a plentiful supply of herrings and biscuits during the rest of the journey. It is doubtful whether these mitigated Bradlaugh's sea-sickness ; but, in any case, the kindness the recruits now manifested, helped, in a great measure, to heal the mental distress that had made the earlier portion of the journey one of the unhappiest episodes of his life.

Three days after leaving London the recruits landed at Dublin. But little time was allowed them to admire the charms of the capital, and Bradlaugh's principal recollection refers to the indelible impression produced

on his mind by the tall stature and magnificent appearance of the Dublin police. The recruits were hurried on to the Newbridge Barracks, at Kildare, where the Seventh Dragoon Guards were stationed, and here Bradlaugh was at once brought up for inspection to Lieutenant-Colonel C. P. Ainslie. This gentleman looked at him deliberately from head to foot, and then quietly remarked:

"And what do you think you are fit for?"

Now Bradlaugh had fondly imagined that he was fit for a great many things, and this opening of the proceedings threw a shade on the ardor of his expectations. Nevertheless, Colonel (now General) Ainslie always behaved with the greatest kindness towards Bradlaugh, who, in fact, never alludes to his life as a soldier without recording his grateful remembrance of his colonel.

Pending the arrival of his uniform, it was decided that Bradlaugh should be deputed to whitewash the Quartermaster's room, as this was light, easy work, and it was considered he could not as yet be fit for anything better. Nothing loth, Bradlaugh set to work, and while thus employed he attracted the attention of the Quartermaster's daughter. This young lady could not help gazing at the unusual sight of a recruit in a black suit, which was rapidly becoming stained with whitewash. Then she noticed how threadbare his dignified apparel had become, how it had shrunk from exposure to weather, how it positively refused to cover the ankles, and would not fit itself over the angular bony frame of this thin and overgrown youth. But his pale face and apparently weak condition so impressed her that she went and fetched him a glass of port wine.

He, however, remained true to his principles. Though so kind in thought, and even more kind in her way of offering the wine, the Quartermaster's daughter could not make Bradlaugh forget his pledge. In spite of his undignified position, being perched on a board close up to the ceiling, and holding in one hand a pail of whitewash, while with the brush in the other hand he made various oratorical gesticulations,

Bradlaugh at once delivered an emotional speech on the dangers of intemperance and the blessings of total abstinence. Perhaps the Quartermaster's daughter agreed with him at heart, though it was probably the first time she had heard such doctrines propounded in the barracks. In any case, she did not take offence at his rebuke, and Bradlaugh ultimately became on the best terms with the whole family. They always treated him kindly, and he still has towards them the most friendly feelings.

It now became necessary for Bradlaugh to commence seriously his duties as a soldier, and these he soon discovered were anything but agreeable. He was very clumsy in his movements ; drill, with its strict, unreasoning discipline, and meaningless repetitions, grated against his nature. Above all, it was the sense of compulsion that destroyed his capacity for learning. He was a bad rider, a bad fencer, he was constantly thrown from his horse, and was the subject of general chaff among his companions. He regarded the riding master as the personification of the Demon ; but looking back to this period, Bradlaugh now thinks that he only did his duty, and that it was the pupil rather than the teacher who was to blame.

There was also a particular horse, which became his constant dread. This animal had a profound knowledge of humanity and the laws of impetus. It knew by various symptoms, by the nervous twitch of the hand that rested on the croup, when a recruit was about to jump on his back. At that precise moment the horse would take two springs forward, and then stop abruptly; thus the recruit was certain to light on its neck or on its tail, according to the allowance he had made in calculating its probable movements. With the neck imprisoned in a stock, with a heavy sword dangling at the side, with no stirrups, and perhaps with spurs, which often accidentally touched the horse, it was after all no easy matter to vault in the saddle ; nor pleasant to be unmercifully chaffed in failing to accomplish what was really a difficult feat.

Under these circumstances, Bradlaugh felt that it was necessary to strike a blow to establish his prestige

with the regiment; and one day, when he had been teased by one of the best boxers of the corps, he challenged him to fight. The result was a foregone conclusion. Even Bradlaugh's most ardent backers did not disguise the fact that they entertained no hope of his achieving a victory. This, however, was a matter of secondary importance. Bradlaugh's object was to show that he did not fear to fight, and that he was capable of enduring a reasonable amount of punishment.

It was under these dispiriting circumstances that the combat began, and he soon received a number of heavy and painful blows about the body. In delivering these hits his adversary somewhat uncovered himself, and, at the timely suggestion of one of his backers, Bradlaugh struck out and knocked him down. He thus found that if he was not a skilful fighter, he had, at least, the power of delivering a fearful blow. Yet this temporary success did not suffice to inspire any hope of victory. The fighting continued with varying chances. Bradlaugh was frequently hit and badly punished, but now and then he succeeded in knocking his man down with one of his sledge-hammer blows. The fight was painfully prolonged. Bradlaugh would have been only too pleased to confess himself beaten, but he was not yet quite certain whether he had suffered sufficiently to firmly establish his character for courage. While wondering to himself whether the time would not soon arrive when he would have earned the right of surrendering with the honors of war, to his intense surprise and delight his adversary suddenly threw up the sponge!

This unlooked-for victory revealed the fact that Bradlaugh, in spite of his pallor, had the making of a most powerful man. He stood six feet high, and if he seemed weak, it was in consequence of his rapid growth, and of the hardships he had endured. There was now an end of the chaffing to which he had been subjected, and the men soon became very fond of him. He was a ready counsellor in all matters of difficulty, and wrote love letters for the soldiers, who were, on their side, only too glad, in exchange, to clean his accoutrements. They called him "Leaves," because

he was always reading books and would never partake of any other stimulant than that derived from tea leaves. He was looked upon as an acquisition to the regiment, and respected alike for his sobriety, the knowledge he possessed, and the courage he was ever ready to display.

This latter quality he had another opportunity of showing on the day before the departure of the regiment from the Newbridge Barracks. It is customary not to supply coals at the old quarters during the last day or two previous to a regiment's departure. The soldiers are, on these occasions, allowed to pick up whatever wood they can find, and are somewhat unscrupulous in their choice. Each man is supposed to contribute his quota, but Bradlaugh knew nothing of this custom, and to the dismay of his companions, made his appearance without even a faggot under his arm.

When the enormity of his omission had been made patent to him, Bradlaugh felt that nothing but a deed of exceptional daring would re-establish his reputation. He therefore went out into the yard, crossed over the quarters of the 17th Lancers, walked up to a dog that had the reputation of extreme ferocity, unfastened its chain, placed its kennel on his head, and marched quietly back to his own companions with the prize, which was broken up and burnt, amid the cheers and laughter of the company. So audacious was this deed, that when an inquiry was instituted as to the whereabouts of the kennel, no one revealed Bradlaugh's name, not even the Lancers, who must have seen him take the lost kennel away, for it was broad daylight at the time.

From Kildare, the 7th Dragoons went to Dublin, and remained for nearly a year at the Portobello Barracks. Here Bradlaugh once more began to devote himself to public agitation, so far, at least, as his military duties would permit. He was a fervent teetotaller, and often lectured to the men in the barrack rooms at night. He used also to appear on the platform in the small temperance hall of French Street. In spite of his red jacket he was invited to sit between James Haughton,

who was so well known in Ireland at the time, and the Rev. Dr. Spratt, a Roman Catholic priest, for whom Bradlaugh had the greatest respect. When refused leave to attend these meetings the soldiers used to form ropes with their blankets, and let him out of the barrack windows, and on his return he patiently submitted to being placed under arrest rather than allow an opportunity to pass of denouncing the evils of intemperance.

On Sundays, when it was fine, the regiment was marched to Ruthmines Church, and here, on one occasion—it was Whitsunday—the Rev. Mr. Halpin preached a sermon which he described as being beyond the understanding of the military portion of his congregation. This somewhat irritated the dragoon guards, and Bradlaugh, to their great delight, wrote a letter to the preacher, not only showing that he fully understood his sermon, but calling him to account for the inaccuracy of his facts and the illogical nature of his opinions.

It was anticipated that an unpleasant answer might be made to this letter, and on the following Sunday the dragoons determined to be fully prepared for the emergency. Accordingly, they listened carefully to the sermon. The Rev. Mr. Halpin did not fail to allude to the letter he had received, but at the first sentence that was impertinent and contemptuous in its tone three hundred dragoons unhooked their swords as one man, and let the heavy weapons crash on the ground. Never had there been such a noise in a church, or a preacher so effectively silenced.

An enquiry was immediately ordered to be held, Bradlaugh was summoned to appear, serious consequences would have ensued; but fortunately the Duke of Cambridge came to Dublin on the very day; the grand review held to welcome his arrival diverted the attention of the authorities from the church scandal, and the matter dropped.

From Dublin the regiment went to Ballincollig, where Bradlaugh was made orderly-room clerk. This put an end to his troubles as a soldier. He was no longer compelled to ride or to fence, and therefore took naturally to this form of exercise. Just as he had been reluctant to obey orders, so now was he

anxious to equal the skill of his companions, and he soon became an excellent rider, a skilful swordsman, and a good shot. Nor was this all: he was even able to return to his old sport of fishing. He had an opportunity of assisting Major Arthur Cavendish Bentinck, the father of the present Duke of Portland, in making up his regimental returns, and this rough but really good-hearted officer lent Bradlaugh his fishing tackle in exchange for this service.

About this time the owners of the land round Tobin's powder manufactory determined to stop all right of way between the barracks and a place called Inniscarra. They built a gate, and shut it against the soldiers and the peasants, but still allowed the gentry to pass. This naturally caused great irritation, and Bradlaugh at once investigated the legal side of the question. Finding that the right of way was fully established, he assembled some of the soldiers and villagers, proceeded to the gate, which, with their assistance, he destroyed, and then wrote on the remains: —"Pulled up by Charles Bradlaugh. C. 52. VII. D.G."

Thus giving his name, his number, and his regiment, he defied the owners to proceed against him, knowing full well that the law was against them. The peasants ever after kept the gate open, ascribing this to Bradlaugh, and on the other hand never failing to keep him constantly supplied with pats of fresh butter, new-laid eggs, and pigs' feet, in recognition of the service he had rendered them. The rich landowner, it is only necessary to add, never ventured to proceed against Private "Leaves," of the 7th Dragoon Guards!

But Bradlaugh's career as a soldier was now drawing to a close. In the summer of 1853, he inherited a small sum after the death of an aunt, and with this he was able to purchase his discharge. He left the regiment, where he became very popular, armed with a "very good character" from Colonel Ainslie, for whose "gentlemanly and considerate treatment," to use Bradlaugh's own words, he will ever cherish the most grateful recollection. Nor will Bradlaugh forget the kindness he experienced at the hands of Major Arthur

Cavendish Bentinck, of the Regimental Sergeant Major, David Scotland, and of his old foe, the Riding-master, Blinkhorne. To this list of friends the Captain, it is true, proved an exception, for he did his best to send Bradlaugh to gaol, and his lack of generosity has never been quite forgiven; and yet Bradlaugh refuses to give his name, a delicacy which shows that after all he can afford to look back to this period of life *sans rancune.*

CHAPTER IV.

In Search of Work—Errand Boy once more—Obtains a Position and is Married—Religious Persecution—Devotion to Public Work—The Secularists—Workmen's Organisations—A Dishonest Freeholder—Bradlaugh to the Rescue.

WHILE Bradlaugh was still serving in the army his father died; and his first thought on leaving was to assist, as far as possible, in the maintenance of his mother. His views on religion had made his parents adopt a course of action which might have thoroughly alienated other and less conscientious children; but no such consideration could influence Bradlaugh's strong sense of duty. He therefore determined not only to earn his own living, but now that his father was dead, to contribute towards his mother's household expenses. This praiseworthy resolution was, however, easier to adopt than to execute. At first he imagined that the very good character he had obtained from the colonel of his regiment would assist him, but he soon discovered that a good military recommendation was of little value in business. In vain he scanned the advertisement columns of the newspaper, or called at various houses of business were he imagined his services might be welcome. Time slipped by, the little store of money he had inherited was melting away, and, far from assisting his family, it seemed as if he would himself soon require assistance.

At last he happened to call on a Mr. Thomas Rogers, solicitor in Fenchurch Street, and begged for employment as a clerk. Mr. Rogers had, however, no vacancy; and, his heart heavy with disappointment, Bradlaugh was turning to leave the office, when Mr. Rogers casually remarked that he wanted an errand boy. "Perhaps," he added, "you may know of one, and could recommend him."

"What salary would you give the errand boy?" Bradlaugh promptly replied, and when Mr. Rogers mentioned the sum of ten shillings a week he at once exclaimed: "Then I'll take it!"

These three brief sentences, remembered almost textually after so many years, decided the whole matter and opened the door to employment, which not only provided the means of existence, but afforded opportunities of acquiring the legal knowledge that has enabled Bradlaugh to overcome so many difficulties, and to beat down the barriers of endless opposition. Beginning his new career modestly as an errand boy, though above twenty years of age and six feet in height, Bradlaugh soon found the means of displaying the natural legal acumen with which he is gifted. Nine months only had elapsed after his engagement as errand boy, when Mr. Rogers entrusted him with the management of the common law department of his business, and built a special office for him. In the evening Bradlaugh added to his still small income by working as secretary or clerk to a building society. It seems, however, as if it was impossible for Bradlaugh to do too many things at once. Having now secured enough to live upon, he once more began to write and speak, and further took upon himself the cares, responsibilities and joys of a family.

In 1854 Bradlaugh married the daughter of Mr. Hooper, a working plasterer, who had attended the meetings at Bonner's Fields, where he was among the foremost to applaud his future son-in-law, the boy orator, whose eloquence delighted so many Chartists and Freethinkers. The profound admiration which Mr. Hooper then conceived for the young agitator has survived all these years, and reached the zenith of satisfaction when Bradlaugh was returned to Parliament. Mr. Hooper is still alive, and maintains the most friendly and affectionate relations with his son-in-law.

As in the case of his best customer, the baker's wife, who encouraged Bradlaugh's first efforts when he gave himself out as a coal merchant, so now his religious antagonists sought his ruin by denouncing his views

to Mr. Rogers. Fortunately, the acute solicitor was not so easily impressed as the ignorant, but kind-hearted, baker woman. Anonymous letters, calling his attention to his clerk's infidel opinions, came to him in great numbers, but he treated them all with the greatest contempt. He, at least, seemed to appreciate the cowardice of such attacks. He felt that if Bradlaugh's opinions were erroneous, it was not by persecution that he would be converted; that Christianity would not be vindicated by taking mean advantage of a poor man, who depended on his work for his living. Mr. Rogers simply asked Bradlaugh not to allow his propaganda to become an injury to his business; and it was to meet this very reasonable request that Bradlaugh adopted the pseudonym of "Iconoclast." Under this expressive *nom de plume* Bradlaugh did all his anti-theological work till the year 1868; but now that Mr. Rogers is dead, and far removed from the reach of the malice of evil tongues, there is no reason any longer for concealing these simple facts.

Feeling himself safe through the just tolerance of his employer, Bradlaugh devoted every spare moment to the work of propaganda. He lectured two or three times every week, sometimes in the small Hall in Philpot Street, sometimes at the old John Street Institution, and on other occasions at the Hall of Science, City Road. This latter Hall was then situated in a little passage beyond the Bunhill Fields Burial Grounds, but when the long lease ran out it could not be renewed, and the more extensive premises forming the present Hall of Science were engaged. The old John Street Institution had been founded in the days of Robert Owen, and was indissolubly connected with his name; but here also the term or tenure ultimately expired, and the landlord, finding that the Hall was used for purposes opposed to his conception of true religion, refused to renew the lease.

In those days the Secularist party barely existed as an organisation. The Freethinkers of England were scattered; and, though far more numerous than generally imagined, it was impossible to fully estimate

their strength. It was only when some effort was made to group them together in distinct organisation that the force of the party became a little more apparent. To achieve this end no one has contributed more than Bradlaugh, though his work was for so many years a work of love. Indeed, far from reaping reward, his bold advocacy of Freethought often endangered and reduced his means of earning a livelihood.

What money he was able to save on his slender earnings he devoted to the propaganda of his principles. This was spent either in the delivering of lectures, the bill-posting and travelling expenses attending thereto, or else in the publication of pamphlets. These latter, it is scarcely necessary to remark, were as a rule a dead failure. It was not to be expected that Bradlaugh could sell his manuscript, or find a publisher who would incur any risk. Bradlaugh himself had to defray all the costs of printing and publishing; nor did he possess any good means for distributing and pushing the sale of his pamphlets. The best known and most powerful firms of publishers would not associate their names with any such efforts. Thus the first steps were difficult in the extreme, and but for the courageous support of Mr. Edward Truelove, who undertook the publication of a great many among Bradlaugh's earliest writings, the organisation of what is now known as the Secularist party would have been probably delayed for several years. The character and nature of this party is admirably described by the Rev. W. M. Molesworth, the vicar of Rochdale, in his "History of England, from 1830 to 1874." The following are his words, and this passage, taken from the writings of a distinguished clergyman, may help to disabuse those who have looked upon a Secularist as being of necessity a most wicked and dangerous person:—

"Secularism is the study of promoting human welfare by material means, measuring human welfare by the utilitarian rules, and making the service of others a duty of life. Secularism relates to the present existence of man and to action, the issues of which can be tested by the experience of this life; having for its object the development of the physical,

moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest perceivable point, as the immediate duty of society; inculcating the practical sufficiency of natural morality apart from Atheism, Theism, or Christianity; engaging its adherents in the promotion of human improvement by material means, and making these agreements the ground of common unity for all who would regulate life by reason, and ennoble it by service. The Secular is sacred in its influence of life; for by purity of material conditions the loftiest natures are best sustained, and the lower the most surely elevated. Secularism is a series of principles, intended for the guidance of those who find theology indefinite, or inadequate, or deem it unreliable. It replaces theology, which mainly regards life as a sinful necessity, as a scene of tribulation through which we pass to a better world. Secularism is, in fact, the religion of doubt. It does not necessarily clash with other religions; it does not deny the existence of God, or even the truth of Christianity; but it does not profess to believe in either one or the other."

At Mr. Rogers' office Bradlaugh was also rapidly acquiring a profound knowledge of common law and the statutory enactments which bear upon the right of public meetings, printing, writing, petition, and other points affecting the position of a public speaker and a political propagandist. This enabled him on many occasions successfully to evade the law, and at other times to enforce the law to the advantage of the people. An incident occurred very soon after his entrance in this employ which powerfully illustrated the utility of a little legal knowledge. The difficulty of finding a place for the holding of a public meeting has always been a great impediment in the earlier stage of any popular movement. The funds necessary for the hiring of a convenient hall are generally wanting; but when they are forthcoming it often happens that the use of the hall is refused. New movements are so often considered dangerous, improper, not conventional nor respectable, that the proprietors of halls refuse to let their premises. A few years later, when these early difficulties have been overcome, and the agitation assumes serious proportions, then halls, funds, support, etc., are all easily obtained. The first steps are always the most difficult and painful.

With a hope of removing to some extent these

obstacles, a number of poor men, after much trouble, and at no little sacrifice to themselves, had subscribed a fund for the erection of a Working Man's Hall in Goldsmith's Row, Hackney Road. As a rule, when workmen meet so as to organise a trade union, a social or benefit society, or for purpose of political agitation, they are obliged to assemble in the parlor of some public house, where, in consideration of the drink they consume, the publican allows them the sole use of a room on a certain appointed day. But a meeting held in this manner, and resolutions passed between cups and tobacco smoke, though often the expression of earnest conviction, generally fail to impress the public at large. It is so easy to caricature the whole business, to insinuate that the political discussion was but a pretext for the inordinate consumption of beer, to qualify the speeches as mere "pot-house oratory," and the company as "a rag-tag-and-bobtail assembly of noisy malcontents." Persons who have seriously attended a sufficient number of these meetings of needy reformers have been able to judge how false any such description would be ; but these conscientious, inquiring minds are not numerous, and the general public is too often governed by ignorant report and external appearances.

The necessity of independent halls, where, at little or no cost, societies in the earlier stages of organisation can meet free from the surrounding and more or less degrading influence of a public-house, has long been felt by the working classes. This has led to the creation of a number, though as yet an insufficient number, of workmen's clubs, with lecture halls attached ; of institutions and halls in various parts of the country, where political and religious meetings can be held with perfect freedom from the interference of lessee, police, or publican. But a quarter of a century ago such institutions were rare indeed, and the venture in Goldsmith's Row might have proved of great utility. Unfortunately the workmen, unaccustomed to such matters, and having never before been the owners of household property, were entrapped. They built their hall on freehold ground without having first secured a

lease or conveyance from the freeholder. The latter consequently asserted his legal right to the entire building; and thus, after much economy and many efforts, the workmen found that they had built a hall, not for themselves, but for an unscrupulous landowner. The latter, the more completely to deceive them, had actually contributed a few pounds towards the building, and then, when it was about completed, claimed it all as his own.

In sore distress, the workmen sought Bradlaugh's advice, who found that under the Statute of Frauds there was no remedy. He therefore advised them to offer a penalty rent of £20 a year. This, however, was refused, so that evidently nothing but great measures would meet the case. Bradlaugh determined to take the law in his own hands. After giving careful instructions that above all the utmost order must be maintained, and anything verging on riot or breach of the peace must be at once suppressed, he placed himself at the head of a hundred stout men, for the most part shareholders or subscribers to the hall. Each man was armed with either a shovel, an axe, a crowbar, or some other useful and formidable implement. With cool deliberation, these men, most of whom were brawny fellows, simply took the entire hall away. Every brick, every plank, every rafter was removed, and divided as nearly as possible among the men with whose money the hall had been built. It was a great disappointment to all concerned; but there was some consolation derived in witnessing the dismay of the freeholder when he found that his bare soil alone had been restored to him. Whatever sacrifice the workmen had been compelled to endure, he had not in any way derived any benefit from his unscrupulous attempt to entrap these poor and honest toilers. The lesson was a severe one on both sides, and workmen have now acquired a very shrewd knowledge of their rights as part proprietors of clubs and halls. A book of legal reference is often one of the first books which workmen procure when founding a club library, and they have learned the advisability of fighting their battles in a strictly legal manner. There is no body of

workmen in the world more adverse to breaking the law than the English artisans, and much of the sound sense they have acquired in this respect is due to the steadfast manner in which Bradlaugh and his supporters have ever resisted any suggestions in favor of violence or illegal action.

CHAPTER V.

The Sunday Trading Bill—Popular Agitation—Hyde Park Riots—Bradlaugh and the Truncheons of the Police—Bradlaugh before the Royal Commissioners—The Right of Meeting in the Park—Lecturing Difficulties—Travelling without Money.

IN June, 1855, the poorer sections of the metropolitan population were greatly aggrieved by a measure introduced in the House of Commons affecting Sunday trading. Lord Robert Grosvenor, the author of this Bill, was accused of attempting to revive the Act by which the Government in Charles II.'s reign sought to atone for the profligacy of the ruling classes by enforcing strict Sabbatarianism on the poorer sections of the community. The injustice of checking Sunday trading was manifest, for the rich need not buy or sell on the Sunday; but with the extreme poor the case is very different. To the costermonger Sunday is often the day on which the largest receipts are made. Many of the extreme poor do not obtain or do not make their money till late on Saturday, and therefore cannot purchase their provisions till Sunday morning. Sunday is also the day for a little indulgence, oranges or nuts for the children, etc.; and these it would be difficult to purchase on the Saturday evening, when probably the head of the family is away, and his wife does not yet know whether their means will allow the enjoyment of such extras. In any case, it was felt that Sunday trading should not be checked merely in so far as it affected the poor. If rest was to be enforced on the costermonger and his donkey, the coachman, groom, and horses of the rich should be treated with equal severity. If it were wrong to serve periwinkles to the poor in their courts and alleys, it was wrong to serve whitebait to the rich in their clubs. Why should those

who cater for the wealthy be allowed to work on Sundays, while trading on the part of the purveyors of the poor was to be condemned as illegal?

The anomaly went home to every breast in the densely-populated by-ways and alleys of the great town. It was a piece of class legislature, which was to be met by class opposition of no ordinary energy. John Bedford Leno, the working-man poet, and author of the well-known "Drury Lane Lyrics," was among the first to start the agitation. He suggested that if the costermongers were not to trade on Sundays they should follow the example of their betters, and drive their donkeys through the Row. He convoked an open-air meeting in Hyde Park to see how religiously the aristocracy observe the Sunday. Accordingly, on Sunday, the 24th of June, a large multitude assembled on the north bank of the Serpentine, and shouted, hooted, chaffed, and yelled at the carriages and horses. The demonstration on this occasion was not of a very formidable character, but still it sufficed to create considerable alarm.

During the ensuing week a large number of handbills and posters were issued, some of them couched in sarcastic terms, which did not fail to elicit great enthusiasm. The following is a good example:

"Hyde Park.—On Sunday the open air fête and monstre concert, under the patronage of the 'Leave-us-Alone' Club, will be repeated on Sunday next. The 'private property' (*vide* Inspector Bligh's speech) will be open to the public on the occasion. Hot water for parties supplied by Lord Robert Grosvenor, who is in plenty of it. Dinners, pale ale, wines, and spirits of the choicest quality will be provided at the West End Clubs during the hours when the Licensed Victuallers' houses are closed by law. Admission gratis to members of the legislature, the clergy, bishops, etc."

Again, and still in answer to Lord Robert Grosvenor's effort to drive all the people to church by stopping all trading—including shaving and the sale of newspapers—on Sunday, the following verses were placarded:

"Sublime decree! by which, our souls to save,
No Sunday tankards foam, no barbers shave;

And chins unmown, and throats unslaked, display
His lordship's reverence for the Sabbath Day!"

In the face of this rising agitation, Sir Richard Mayne, then the Chief Commissioner of Police, had the impudence to issue an official proclamation, giving notice that no such meeting or assemblage of persons as that announced would be allowed to take place, and invoking all well disposed persons to stop at home, for "all necessary measures would be adopted to prevent any such meeting or assemblage, and effectually to preserve the public peace, and to suppress any attempt at the disturbance thereof."

This claim on the part of the Commissioner of Police to prevent a meeting seemed altogether new; and when Bradlaugh read this announcement he at once investigated the law, and convinced himself that Sir Richard Mayne possessed no such authority. Bradlaugh maintained that the people or a political society were just as free to hold meetings and demonstrations in Hyde Park as, for instance, the Four-in-Hand Club. He therefore resolved to attend on the occasion and resist, or at least refuse to obey, the police in the execution of what he deemed an unjustifiable interference with the right of meeting.

The events that ensued have probably not been forgotten. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon of the Sunday, July 1st, dense masses of people collected on the north side of the Serpentine. There were all classes mingled in this assemblage, and on the whole they at first behaved with remarkable order. But the sight of elegant carriages and riders passing leisurely backwards and forwards irritated the multitude. The cries, groans, and hisses of the previous Sunday were renewed. The noise soon frightened the horses, and some serious accidents might have occurred, but the police interfered on behalf of the wealthier frequenters of the Park. A series of charges was organised. This naturally led to considerable rioting, in which the police were accused of perpetrating many acts of cruelty. A number of persons were hurt, and so many arrests made that there was not room for the prisoners

at the Vine Street Police-station. The cells were so crowded that the horrors of the black hole of Calcutta were to some extent re-enacted.

In one of the charges, Bradlaugh saw five policemen striking a short man. The hat of this unfortunate individual was beaten in with a truncheon, and he held up his hands, crying out piteously :

"For God's sake, do not hit me—take me !"

This was rather more than Bradlaugh could patiently witness. Springing forward, he put one of the truncheons back with his gloved hand, and shouted, in a voice that seemed accustomed to command :

"The next man that strikes, I will knock him down."

Taken by surprise, the policemen paused, and finding that Bradlaugh seemed at once very strong and very determined, they contented themselves with conveying their prisoner quietly away.

A short time after this incident, Bradlaugh was standing on the grass, when the police, who had gathered together on the roadway, made another charge, after ordering the people to disperse. This injunction was very generally obeyed ; but Bradlaugh, considering that the police were not justified in their conduct, stood his ground. One of the policemen consequently rushed up to him, and began pushing him along with his truncheon. Calmly and quietly Bradlaugh turned round upon him and said :

"Do not do that, friend ; you have no right to do it, and I am stronger than you are."

Amazed at Bradlaugh's calmness and deliberation, probably puzzled to know how to act, the policeman beckoned to two of his comrades, who immediately came up to his assistance. But they no sooner approached him than, by a skilful, quick movement, Bradlaugh caught hold of their truncheons, one in each hand. Having thus neutralised two of the policemen, he shouted out to the third :

"If you attempt to touch me, I will take one of those truncheons and knock you down with it."

Finding that his threat did not seem to carry conviction, he gave a wrench in which skill and herculean force were combined, and had in a moment disarmed

both policemen, while the third stood paralysed at the spectacle of so much audacity and strength.

Nor had this episode failed to impress the mob. With yells of triumph a number of men rushed forward, and before he could prevent the demonstration, Bradlaugh was hoisted on their shoulders, and carried off, amid cheers and the waving of hats, for a distance of a hundred yards, when at last he persuaded his admirers to set him down. Shortly after this he left the Park, so as to avoid the attempts that were being made to constitute him a leader. But when, a few weeks later, a Royal Commission was appointed by the House of Commons to inquire into these disturbances, and the cruelties which the police were alleged to have committed, Bradlaugh again made his appearance and gave some important evidence.

After relating the above events to the Commissioners, he was asked whether he had been treated roughly by a mounted policeman, and replied he certainly had not, or otherwise he would have dismounted his aggressor. This remark elicited an expression of contempt from the policeman in question, which Bradlaugh did not fail to notice. He quietly explained that he had noticed, on entering, the policeman's horse waiting outside ; and, as he did not like to be suspected of boasting or of exaggeration, perhaps the policeman would not object to stepping down and mounting his horse. He would then, and before the Royal Commissioner, undertake to at once unhorse him. A cheer naturally greeted this challenge, which of course was not accepted.

When asked whether he saw any women ill-treated, Bradlaugh's answer was characteristic, and is thus given in the evidence recorded in the Blue Book :—

"I saw in the rush, in one of them, a man and two women thrown down, and I saw the police run over them. They did not strike them, but they ran right over them. I made a remark to my father-in-law: 'It is lucky they are no sisters of mine, or else they would stop to pick them up.'"

The following passages in Bradlaugh's evidence also produced a great sensation :—

"You did not go into the Park to resist the police?"

"Decidedly not. I went in consequence of seeing the notice of Sir Richard Mayne forbidding it, and to see what took place there."

"Out of curiosity?"

"Not exactly. I had heard it said that they were rabble, and I did not believe it, and I went to see for myself."

"Your indignation was not excited till you got there?"

"Not till some time after I had been there. At first I should have come away. The police were doing nothing, and at first everything seemed to be very quiet. There was no kind of meeting, except that there was a large concourse of people. I should have come away but for those rushes of the police amongst the people."

"There was not a disorderly crowd?"

"No."

"You spoke of Sir Richard Mayne's proclamation as forbidding this meeting. Did you read it?"

"Yes."

"Does it forbid it?"

"The tenor of it seemed to me to be forbidding the assemblage, and I had not heard then, and have not heard now, that Sir Richard Mayne has any power to forbid my going into the Park; therefore I went!"

This last reply gives the key-note of Bradlaugh's conduct, and was greeted with great cheering. At the conclusion of his evidence, the Commissioner, the Right Hon. Stuart Wortley, publicly thanked him, and it was a proud day for Bradlaugh when the audience, who crowded the Court of Exchequer, applauded to their utmost the bold manner in which he denied the right of the Commissioner of Police to issue notices forbidding the people to meet in the Park.

This was the first step in a struggle that lasted for many years. The question is one of fundamental importance. When a political grievance arises in which the upper or middle classes are deeply interested, it is easy enough to hold a grand demonstration in some central assembly room, even though the bill

posting and hire of hall cost several hundred pounds. But there are many questions that affect the poorer classes only, and the freedom of public meetings would be of little value if the cost of such meetings rendered them impossible in such cases.

A monster demonstration in Hyde Park, on the other hand, only entails, at most, the wear and tear of banners, the hire of bands, and the cost of a limited amount of bill posting and advertising, and is, therefore, more within the means of the poorer sections of the population. If the poor wish to make their voices heard, they must preserve the right of meeting in the Parks; and to render these meetings more impressive, Bradlaugh has frequently urged that neither bands nor banners should be employed. The display of bunting, and the blare of brass instruments, he argued, only collected together a rabble not really interested in the cause, who might very possibly discredit by their conduct the sober and earnest organisers of the demonstration.

The year following the Hyde Park disturbances, Bradlaugh commenced the publication of a series of papers entitled "Half-Hours with Freethinkers," and in this he was considerably assisted by the late John Watts. Another and more difficult task was commenced at that time. This was a "Commentary on the Pentateuch," and it has since been entirely revised, and is now a part of Bradlaugh's work, "The Bible: What is It?"

While thus engaged writing these anti-theological works, Bradlaugh not only lectured in London, but also in the country, and it was in 1857 that he first appeared in the town of Northampton. This lecturing proved to be a most arduous business. On Saturdays, after office hours, Bradlaugh would start for some country town. On Sunday he probably delivered three lectures, and then would be compelled to rush off, perhaps before the conclusion of the last meeting, in order to catch the latest train back to town. On other occasions he had to rise at the earliest hour on Monday morning, to be in time for the first train that would carry him back to London, and enable him to reach his office and resume his daily duties.

This work was further complicated by the want of funds, which necessitated the travelling in third class carriages, and the taking of slow trains. Bradlaugh relates a curious anecdote in illustration of the trials and misfortunes to which he was exposed. It was in midwinter, and the intemperance of the season was added to the hardships of a long journey. Bradlaugh, however, contrived to reach Edinburgh, and there he was received by only a very small audience. His profits were consequently minute, and fell far below his anticipations. After paying his bill at the Temperance Hotel, where he had occupied a modest room, the balance of ready cash was reduced to a *minimum*. He had just enough money to take a Parliamentary ticket to Bolton, where he had agreed to lecture on his way home.

To catch this economical train it was necessary to start at five in the morning, when no one was up to prepare breakfast. In the streets it was freezing hard, but Bradlaugh warmed himself by carrying his own luggage, consisting of a big tin box containing books and a few clothes, and a black bag. The necessity of economising the few shillings that remained caused him to dispense with the services of a porter. A little out of breath, still more sleepy and hungry, Bradlaugh finally secured a seat in the third-class compartment, and the train steamed out of Edinburgh station with provoking slowness. The snow presently began to fall, accumulated on the rails, and delayed the train so long that it only arrived at Carlisle long after the departure of the corresponding parliamentary train. It was now impossible to reach Bolton in time for the lecture, unless he booked for Preston by a quick train, which was to start in about three quarters of an hour, but the extra fare took all Bradlaugh's money with the exception of fourpence-halfpenny. With this sum anything like a meal at the railway station was out of the question; he discovered a little shop in a street outside, however, where he obtained a mug of hot tea and a very small hot meat pie in exchange for his few pence.

This was the only meal possible during the journey; and then, to make matters worse, he found at Preston

that the corresponding train for Bolton had started. Now Bradlaugh had no right to travel by this corresponding train, for he had only been able to book for Preston, and as he did not possess a ticket he could not hope to persuade the station-master to put on an extra train; but, fortunately, he had made acquaintance with an old gentleman who had the proper ticket. This Bradlaugh borrowed, sought an interview with the railway authorities, exposed to them in strictly legal terms all the awful consequences that might accrue to the company and to them if they failed to carry on the travellers, as promised in the time-tables, to all destinations for which they had booked.

After considerable disputing and many loud protestations, arrangements were made by which they were able to proceed at once to Bolton. So far Bradlaugh had won his point, but when he was installed in the railway carriage, he found himself under the perplexing necessity of restoring the borrowed ticket with which he had been able to secure the conveyance. Then when, just as the train was starting, the guard looked into the compartment to verify the tickets, it was discovered that the gentleman who caused all the disturbance had no ticket, was not entitled to proceed to Bolton, and, worse still, possessed no money.

Following so closely on so many menaces and so much "tall talk," this was a somewhat ignominious collapse; but Bradlaugh protested that he had been pleading the cause of the old gentleman, and as for himself, offered his black bag as security for the fare. This fortunately was accepted, and Bradlaugh reached Bolton at a quarter to eight. His lecture was announced for eight o'clock, he had been travelling since five in the morning with nothing more to nourish him than what he had been able to procure from the odd 4½d. that remained after booking for Preston. Yet he had only just time to wash and change clothes, and then appeared on the platform cold and hungry.

The lecture was to be delivered in an old Unitarian Chapel. There was no gas, the building was filled with a foggy mist, through which the feeble glimmer of an insufficient number of candles shed an uncertain

light on the cheerless, cold, gloomy surroundings. This depressing experience terminated, however, with an amusing episode. When Bradlaugh concluded an opponent rose, and thought he would create a great sensation by speaking of paid agitators, and attacking the lecturer for the money-making, easy life he was leading. In one sense this gentleman certainly succeeded. A great sensation was undoubtedly created, for Bradlaugh at once rose and faithfully related in all its details the hardships which poverty had forced him to endure that day. Strange to say, Bradlaugh has never again met this adversary.

CHAPTER VI.

A Busy Year—The Orsini Attempt—Simon Bernard—Watching over the Prison—Bradlaugh and the Police Spy.—Bradlaugh and the French Empire—Active Propaganda—Personalities—A Hot Discussion—A Grotesque Poster.

BOTH in politics and in theological debates the year 1858 was an important epoch for Bradlaugh. It was on the 15th of February that Simon Bernard was arrested. In June, Bradlaugh held his first formal and public theological debate with the Rev. Brewin Grant, B.A., who was at that time Dissenting minister at Sheffield. In November, Bradlaugh commenced to edit the *Investigator*, which had been formerly conducted by the late Mr. Robert Cooper, and he was also, during the same year, elected president of the London Secular Society, in the place of Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, who retired so as to devote more time to purely journalistic work.

The various debates were considered great successes, but the *Investigator* proved a great failure. Its circulation was small, its financial resources daily dwindled, till—in August, 1859—the paper had to be given up.

Early in the year the whole country was thrown into a state of excitement by the Orsini attempt, and the subsequent prosecution of Dr. Simon Bernard at the instigation of the French Government. Simultaneously, proceedings were taken against Mr. Edward Truelove for publishing a pamphlet entitled "Is Tyrannicide Justifiable?" Bradlaugh became the honorary secretary to the defence of his old friend and publisher, and was also a member of the committee for the defence of Dr. Bernard. The incidents of this latter *cause célèbre* form part of the history of this country, and were well calculated to increase Bradlaugh's faith in the power of popular agitation.

Lord Palmerston's administration had been defeated, in spite of his hold on the country, by the force of the indignation which his Bill to Amend the Law of Conspiracy had occasioned.

The prosecution commenced by this defunct ministry had now to be completed by another Government, representing the majority which had turned out the former administration for its conduct in this very matter. Nevertheless, the friends of Dr. Bernard were not over-confident as to the result. Bradlaugh believes that the celebrated Orsini bombs, which constituted so important a part of the evidence, were not those which Mr. Taylor, of Birmingham, had manufactured. These were, he thinks, intended for the revolutionary movement in Italy, and the Orsini bombs were probably made in Italy after the same model. In any case, the greatest anxiety was felt as to the verdict; but some hopes were derived from the fact that one of the jurymen was known to be a friend; and at Bradlaugh's instigation he was sent into the jury-box with his pockets loaded with an extraordinary amount of sandwiches. The party were determined that he should not yield for want of food; but their precautions were needless. The jury retired at twenty minutes to three, and at four o'clock they returned with the ever-memorable verdict of *Not guilty.*

Before the trial, and while Bernard lay in prison awaiting his fate, considerable fear was entertained lest he should be surreptitiously given up to the French authorities. A watch was therefore instituted over the prison; communications, in spite of all regulations to the contrary, were established with the prisoner, and the Defence Committee kept informed as to everything that happened within the walls. Had Bernard been removed, there were friends ever close at hand, both night and day, ready to give the alarm. A riot would very probably have ensued, and an attempt made to rescue Bernard in the confusion.

The organisation of all these precautionary measures involved a great deal of labor, and required much tact. The presence of French police spies was supplemented by the interference of English spies; and against these

it was necessary for Bernard's friends to be on the alert. On one occasion some mounted police followed Bradlaugh to his home in Cassland Road, Hackney. At another time he entered a restaurant near Leicester Square with Dr. Bernard and Mr. Sparkhall, an old and trusty friend, who subsequently joined and helped to organise the English legion that fought so well for Garibaldi. While they were discussing a French spy came in, and sitting down in the next compartment soon pretended to be asleep.

Bradlaugh, recognising the individual, leaned over the compartment, took a long spill, as if to light a cigar, and held the burning paper under the spy's nose. As the man was only pretending to be asleep, this treatment did not fail to awake him most promptly. Further, this manner of dealing with him left no room for doubt as to his having been recognised, and he therefore simply rose and quietly left the restaurant, without even protesting against the burn inflicted on his most prominent feature. So numerous were the foreign spies in London at that time, that popular irritation was excited, and once Bernard himself was mistaken by a mob in the Park, and attacked as a French spy. His friends had great difficulty in shielding him and in persuading his aggressors that they were mistaken.

During the time of all this agitation Bradlaugh had the advantage of laying the foundation of a long friendship with the late Thomas Allsop, who was so deeply compromised in the Orsini business. As the author of the "Recollections of Coleridge," Mr. Allsop was well known to the English public, and his works, and the personal popularity he enjoyed, won for him the compliment of a handsome present from the Emperor of Brazil. Bradlaugh also met at this time Mr. W. J. Linton, the engraver, and gained the respect and friendship of a number of leading French politicians. The following year he was in constant communication with Joseph Mazzini, then living as Signor Ernesti, at Onslow Terrace, and all these associations inspired Bradlaugh with great animosity towards the Emperor Napoleon. Alluding to this feeling, in a brief auto-

biographical sketch, which Bradlaugh wrote previous to his departure for America, at the time when the Republic in France existed but in name, he says :

"Whilst the late Emperor Napoleon was in power I hated him, and never lost an opportunity of working against him until the *déchéance* came. I am not sure now that I always judged him fairly ; but nothing, I think, could have tempted me to either write or speak of him with friendliness or kindness during his life. *Le sang de mes amis était sur son âme.* Now that the tomb covers his remains my hatred has ceased ; but no other feeling has arisen in its place. Should any of his family seek to resume the Imperial purple, I should remain true to my political declarations of sixteen years since, and should exert myself to the uttermost to prevent France falling under another Empire. I write this with much sadness, as 1870 to 1873 have dispelled some of my illusions held firmly during the fifteen years which preceded. I had believed in such men as Louis Blanc, Ledru Rollin, Victor Hugo, as possible statesmen for France. I was mistaken. They were writers, talkers, and poets ; good men to ride on the stream or to drown in honest protest, but lacking force to swim against or turn back the tide by the might of their will. I had believed, too, in a Republican France, which is yet only in the womb of time, to be born after many pangs and sore travailing."

Entertaining these opinions, it is not surprising that Bradlaugh's lecture on "Louis Napoleon" was couched in such terms as to excite the susceptibilities of the French Government ; and when, in March, 1859, it was announced that this lecture was about to be delivered in Saint Martin's Hall, Count Walewski proceeded to remonstrate with the English Government. The result was that when Bradlaugh came to lecture he found the hall filled with policemen. It was impossible to resist this display of force ; but Bradlaugh instituted proceedings at once against the proprietor of the hall for breach of contract. As the proprietor had, however, been indemnified by the authorities, he avoided the suit by promptly paying damages.

By this time Bradlaugh had become so notorious that he found himself engaged in a number of debates in all parts of the country. He revisited Northampton to discuss with Mr. John Bowes, who seems to have been utterly unfitted for platform controversy. Then,

at Sheffield, he debated with a Reverend Dr. Monsor, who professed to be a Jewish Rabbi, and was then going through the various phases necessary to his conversion to Christianity and admittance into the Church of England. This gentleman would, it was thought, convince the audience of Bradlaugh's ignorance, and immediately plunged into Hebrew. During the four nights the discussion lasted they both drew Hebrew characters on a black board, a process which amused and mystified the audience, and by which Bradlaugh gained great credit; for, whatever his knowledge of Hebrew might have been, he certainly contrived to write the square Hebrew characters with great clearness and rapidity. The audience could not understand the points at issue; but they gave the palm to the disputant who wrote the best hand.

At Glasgow, Bradlaugh held a public discussion with Mr. Court, representing the Glasgow Protestant Association; at Paisley with Mr. Smart, who proved to be a very gentlemanly antagonist; and at Halifax with the Rev. T. D. Matthias, a Welsh Baptist minister, with whose sincerity Bradlaugh was much impressed. Then, in June, 1860, he again debated every Monday night for four weeks with the Rev. Brewin Grant, at Bradford. This discussion, unfortunately, degenerated into personalities. As a rule Bradlaugh attacks arguments rather than individuals; but if his opponents have the misfortune to make any personal allusion to him, then he retorts in a manner peculiarly his own, which, if not always gentle, is invariably effective.

When writing about the Rev. Brewin Grant, Mr. John Watts states that he first met Mr. Holyoake for the purpose of discussing Secular principles; but these he could not understand, and therefore never discussed. Bounce and slander, misrepresentation and impudence are represented to have constituted the chief force of this reverend gentleman's method of debate. Mr. Watts states that when Robert Cooper and C. Southwell challenged the Rev. Brewin Grant to open debate, he contented himself with "perambulating the country, proclaiming Cooper's ignorance and Southwell's confessions." Then Mr. Grant started the theory that

Freethought was dead, almost immediately after Bradlaugh gathered large and enthusiastic audiences round him at Sheffield. This fact was in such evident contradiction with Mr. Grant's assertions that he was obliged again to enter the lists with Bradlaugh. Following upon the above circumstances the debate was naturally embittered; but when Mr. Grant, leaving aside the subject of debate, proceeded to slander the memory of Thomas Paine and Richard Carlile, Bradlaugh, by the fervor of his reply, elicited a storm of indignation. This demonstration caused Mr. Grant to make a grimace; and quick to seize the advantage that this ridiculous conduct gave, Bradlaugh, without for a moment interrupting the thread of his discourse, exclaimed :—

"See, friends, this man, who, with low vulgarity, protrudes his tongue—the only answer this reverend defender of the Bible can give. How low the cause such conduct champions! I entered on this debate intending to avoid all personal recrimination, and carefully abstained from any attack except on the book we met here to examine, and with pain I have heard you calumniate and vilify great men, whose virtues you cannot imitate, but for whom, in your malice and weakness, you invent vices nearer akin to your own mean nature, which can look down and grovel in the mire, but dare not gaze upward to meet the glorious light of truth."

On the following Monday's discussion, Mr. Grant repeated his allegations against Richard Carlile and Thomas Paine, and then challenged Bradlaugh to meet him in a debate on personalities, and added that he knew Bradlaugh would not accept his challenge. He further charged Bradlaugh with falsehood, and for one instance reminded the audience that Bradlaugh had accused him of protruding his tongue. Thereupon a number of persons sprang to their feet in the body of the hall, and cried out: "So you did; you did it at Halifax, too." After this interruption Mr. Grant said that in any case the chairman did not see him, and that if he did his tongue was clean, while if the infidels showed their tongues they were dirty.

This was but one of the many similar low-class personalities which disgraced this debate. In vain did

Bradlaugh attempt to pass this by with the contempt it deserved, and in replying dwelt at length on the Scriptural subject under discussion. Mr. Grant again returned to the charge, twitted Bradlaugh for calling him "my friend," and once more challenged him to a discussion on personalities, or to have the letter L branded on his face. At last Bradlaugh was roused, and a brief quotation from his reply may give some conception of the violence of these discussions :—

"The alternative Mr. Grant offers me is not a pleasant one. I should not like to be branded as he describes; his own appearance under such an infliction is sufficient for me. I will accept the challenge, but I will not degrade the platform with such a debate. If it takes place, let it be on the moors of Sheffield, or in Shipley Glen, or some large field. Mr. Grant says I whimper and whine at his personalities. This is not true. At first I should have preferred a discussion of the question, but now I almost prefer that it be continued until the end, that men may see how infamous a man may be in his speech, and yet a champion of the Bible."

With reference to Carlile, Bradlaugh said :

"We propose a monument to Richard Carlile, not for his follies, nor for any vice, nor for any crime of which he may have been guilty, but that he, with a courage which you cannot imitate, fought for the people against a powerful Government for freedom, both of tongue and press, and for ten long years was an imprisoned martyr to the people's cause." (Loud and prolonged cheering and waving of hats followed this.) "As to Paine, you are so base that, not content with mis-stating and distorting facts, you revive, by aid of your native meanness, a killed calumny, a scotched snake, which, discovered by another reptile crawling on the earth, is brought here to try its rotten sting. Paine was a man so self-denying, that he gave up a profitable copyright to the good of his country, and did not, like you, insist on being paid a night in advance ere he would defend that which he believed to be the truth." (Mr. Grant during this speech was very uneasy, and asked Mr. Bradlaugh to look at the audience, and not at him.) Bradlaugh thereupon retorted: "I will take it that you are, as indeed you ought to be, ashamed to look an earnest man in the face, and I will look at you no more. Mr. Grant complains that I have called him 'My friend.' It is true. In debate I have accustomed myself to wish all men my friends, and to greet them as friends if possible. The habit, like a garment, fits me, and I have in this discussion used the phrase

'My friend;' but believe me I did not mean it. Friendship with you would be a sore disgrace, and little honor."

In reading over discussions of this description many persons will consider the tone adopted very repulsive; but one of the most striking points in Bradlaugh's experience is the gross and personal abuse he has had to endure. Persons who are undoubtedly gentlemen in birth, in education, and, as a rule, in conduct, have altogether forgotten every principle of fair play and of good behavior when brought face to face with the outspoken and frank defence of Freethought Bradlaugh has so ably conducted. The most absurd and virulent forms of attack have been employed by his adversaries. For instance, when he was about to lecture at the Dewsbury Public Hall, the following absurd announcement was posted all over the towns by persons who thought that by such means they could defend their religion.

"Grand discovery! To be seen to-morrow, Sunday, not one hundred miles from the Public Hall, a fine specimen of the gorilla tribe, standing seven feet six inches in height, imported into England from Sheffield, the capital of the Hollyhock settlement, in the interior of Africa, and brought to this town for public exhibition by Mr. Greenfield. This gorilla is said to be one of the finest of its tribe. It presents a bold front, is impudent in its demeanor, and growls fearfully at the approach of a debt-collector, magistrate, or any Government officer. Having been some time in England under an assumed name, it has acquired a smattering of the language, and will address visitors on the origin, progress, and future prospects of the gorilla tribe. As the animal will be properly secured, parties need be in no apprehension of danger."

Needless to say that this ridiculous attack did not prevent a large audience gathering together, and many came from a distance, from Huddersfield, Leeds, and other towns. But when treated in this manner, it was not surprising if occasionally Bradlaugh hit back, and when he did condescend to retaliate he was fully able to do this with interest.

CHAPTER VII.

Railway Accident—The *National Reformer*—Dual Editorship—Breaking New Ground—Wigan Riots—Obstreperous Clergymen—Facing the Mob—Progress among Brickbats.

ON returning to London from debating with the Rev. Brewin Grant at Bradford, Bradlaugh nearly lost his life in a railway accident. The engine-driver had been accustomed to a goods train, and failed altogether to calculate the impetus of a passenger train. The result was, that on arriving at King's Cross the train dashed past the platform, right through the station, and only stopped when it reached the street and open space outside. Had Bradlaugh been killed, the Rev. Brewin Grant would not have failed to attribute the circumstance to a fortunate and just intervention of providence; but as he escaped with a good shaking, there was nothing to be said. In another case, when lightning struck a public-house where Bradlaugh was to have procured a bed for the night, this accident was publicly and solemnly attributed to a direct intervention on the part of the Divinity; though no one sought to explain what good purpose could have been served by striking a public-house as a warning against the advocate of teetotalism, particularly as Bradlaugh was not on the spot at the time.

The work of propaganda was now greatly facilitated by the foundation of the *National Reformer*. A number of friends from Halifax, Sheffield and other towns took shares, in order to create the necessary capital for this enterprise. But just as the necessary prospectus had been issued, Mr. Joseph Barker, a well-known public speaker, returned from America, and was associated in the editorship of the paper. This they divided equally in two, each writing as he thought fit in his half. But this did not prove a happy union.

At first the readers were requested to believe that, should different opinions on any subject appear in the two divisions of the paper, it was not to be taken as a sign that the editors were falling out, but only as a proof of the glorious independence they both enjoyed, and that they were both writing exactly what they thought. Unfortunately, it is not so easy to "agree to differ." The divergence of opinion soon changed into open hostility, and in August, 1861, Mr. Barker attempted to get sole possession of the paper, but the shareholders preferred Bradlaugh.

For months previously he had been practically divorced from his co-editor, and the one half of the paper generally contained abuse and attacks on those who wrote the other half. In explanation of this conduct, Bradlaugh states that when he first met Joseph Barker he professed to be an Atheist and a Republican; but soon after he pretended to be a Christian, and finally spoke in favor of slavery. Bradlaugh has often wondered whether, in his various theological and political opinions, Mr. Barker was himself deluded, or only thought to delude others. He undoubtedly possessed great ability, and had he been more steadfast and thorough in his character, he had the making of a great man. Also it must be admitted that in the days of the dual editorship the *National Reformer* was an interesting and instructive paper, containing a vast store of miscellaneous information and the proof of varied and extensive reading. Nor were the disputes between the joint editors devoid of a certain piquancy and originality. In fact, the paper was a phænomenon among papers.

In October, 1860, Bradlaugh attempted to break new ground by visiting Wigan, and here he had to contend against no ordinary opposition. Some twenty years had elapsed since the inhabitants of Wigan had had any opportunity of hearing a Freethought lecture. The local clergy were, therefore, not a little shocked and concerned when they heard that Bradlaugh had secured the Commercial Hall, and was about to lecture for two nights on "What has the Bible done for England's sons and daughters?" They at once engaged the

largest place of meeting in the town, and advertised opposition lectures under the same title, adding the extra inducement of "admission free." As Bradlaugh was only known at Wigan by reputation, and had never been there before, he anticipated only a small audience. The hall, however, was full, but the friends and sympathisers were few and far between. Nor was there anyone of sufficient influence to take the chair, and Bradlaugh invited the audience to select their own chairman, which was ultimately done. Order was also fairly well maintained, considering that Bradlaugh was speaking in direct opposition to the feelings of the majority present.

When, however, on the following evening, Bradlaugh again appeared to give his second lecture, matters assumed a very different aspect. The hall was crowded to excess, outside there were several hundred people unable to gain admittance, and all were engaged in discussing and abusing Bradlaugh. Choice Billingsgate was used by fanatics determined to give the Infidel a sound lesson. On his entrance Bradlaugh was greeted with an amount of hooting and yelling that would have disconcerted most men. But in spite of the din, he commenced with stentorian voice to deliver his lecture. As he spoke, the windows were attacked, the panes of glass wantonly destroyed, while a constant hammering was kept up against the door.

At last, finding that the noise would not cease, Bradlaugh went down himself to the door, and was not a little disgusted to find that the leader and encourager of the disturbance was a clergyman of the Church of England, who wanted to gain admittance. Bradlaugh explained to him that fatal accidents might ensue if any attempt was made to enter the room in its present over-crowded condition. He answered, however, that he knew there was plenty of room, and would come in. Deeming it more prudent to avoid the danger of an increased uproar, Bradlaugh admitted him, and then had to fight hard to shut the door again. But for his great strength this would have been impossible, and as it was he received a severe blow in the side. The pain this occasioned rendered his task more

severe. Every now and then a loud crash showed that a door or window had been broken in; some among the audience, alarmed, sprang to their feet, and it was only by dint of hard shouting that Bradlaugh could make himself heard so as to pacify the people. Towards the conclusion of the lecture the secretary of the rector forced his way bodily through a window, and Bradlaugh felt sorely tempted to pitch him back through the same aperture. If he had intended to create a riot, the secretary could not have begun operations in a more suitable manner. Inspired, probably, by this disorderly example, some persons now began to throw lime in through the windows, while others who had managed to climb on the roof poured water down the ventilators!

This last exploit was viewed only in the light of a joke, but the audience became more seriously alarmed when a hand and arm, waving a dirty rag, appeared through a little hole in the centre of the ceiling. One man, jumping up on his seat, shouted excitedly at Bradlaugh that the devil had come to fetch him.

When at last the lecture was over, Bradlaugh was struck by several persons in the confusion that ensued. On leaving the hall, a well-dressed man rushed up to him and menaced him, saying: "Do you not expect God to strike you dead, and don't you deserve that the people should serve you out for your blasphemy?" Thereupon two other persons deliberately spat in Bradlaugh's face. Alone against this surging mob of gentlemanly ruffians, Bradlaugh could not offer much resistance. With but a few of his Yorkshire friends to help, he would soon have taught the people of Wigan better manners.

Mobbed, dogged, assaulted and insulted, with two or three hundred people yelling around him, Bradlaugh made his way to the railway station, thinking it would not be prudent to return to his hotel, where a worse riot might have occurred. He purported taking a ticket for Liverpool, and it was only when after much difficulty he succeeded in reaching the station, that he discovered that he had left all his money at the hotel. Fortunately, after some manœuvring and at

the risk of breaking his neck, Bradlaugh succeeded in escaping from the crowd, and got safely back to the hotel accompanied by only one person; but his troubles were not yet over. Although there was not the slightest disturbance and no crowd, the landlady ordered him at once to leave the house. In vain he appealed to her sense of hospitality. It was of no avail, she would not have him rémain another minute in the place. Finding that persuasion was of no use, Bradlaugh altered his tone. He stood on his legal rights, walked up stairs, locked the door, retired to bed, and defied anyone to disturb him at their peril.

In the next issue of the *National Reformer* Bradlaugh wrote the following characteristic leader :—

"If all lectures are attended with the same risk and hazard as those delivered by me at Wigan this week, I shall require my friends who are favorable to an extended propaganda to pay the premium for a policy in the office for insurance against accidents to limb and life. I have no taste for martyrdom, and I protest most vigorously against the right of any body of religious fanatics to canonise me as St. Stephen the Second. I may be wrong, but I shall never be convinced of my error by a mob of true believers yelling at my heels like mad dogs, under the leadership of a pious rector's trusty subordinate, or hammering at the door of my lecture-room under the direction of an infuriate church parson. I object that in the nineteenth century it is hardly to be tolerated that a bigot priest shall use his influence with the proprietor of the hotel where I am staying in order to 'get that devil kicked out into the street' after half-past ten at night. I do not admit the right of a rich church dignitary's secretary to avoid the payment of his three-pence at the door by jumping through the window, especially when I or my friends have to pay for the broken glass and sash frame. True, all these things and worse happened at Wigan, but I should prefer that they did not happen again. They will not prevent my lecturing if they do, but they will make my talk louder and stronger, which will be inconvenient to all parties. I have also a word of advice to the Mayor of Wigan, who appears to be a respectable, red-faced, dumpty sort of shop-keeping person, and who, as I am credibly informed, used threats about stopping my lectures by force of law. My advice to you, Mr. Mayor, is contained in one word —try."

This protest seems to have produced due effect, for Bradlaugh visited Wigan again and again, and the

threats against him were only partially carried into execution. The clergy found that after all he had as much right to lecture as they had to preach, and it was not long before he became a welcome visitor, with a large party of Secularists ready to hail his coming, and to ensure him a good and attentive audience. During the winter of the same year he held two formal debates at Wigan — one with Mr. Hutchings, a Nonconformist layman, and the other with the Rev. Woodville Woodman, a Swedenborgian divine. Again, in this same and busy year, Bradlaugh also debated for four nights with Dr. Brindley, at Oldham; for two nights with the Rev. Dr. Baylee, the President of St. Alban's College, at Birkenhead; and for two nights with the Rev. Dr. Rutherford, of Newcastle.

When Bradlaugh returned to Wigan for the first time after the riot just described he was accompanied by Mr. John Watts, and so as not to be exposed to the indignity of ejection from the hotel, he accepted the hospitality offered by a friend. When it became known, however, that this gentleman had offered to take Bradlaugh into his house, he was threatened and annoyed in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, Bradlaugh's lectures were a great success. The Mayor had threatened to stop the meeting and arrest Bradlaugh, but on second thoughts he allowed events to take their own course. Bradlaugh had caused the front row of the hall to be reserved for the clergy of the district, but this time none of them attended, and the meeting, in their absence, behaved in a comparatively orderly manner.

It was only when everything was over and Bradlaugh turned homewards that anything like a riot occurred. He was yelled at in true collier fashion; but Bradlaugh produced a temporary lull by turning round, facing the crowd, and inviting them to select their two best men, with whom he would settle the matter in the most approved pugilistic form. Low as this form of argument may seem, it was perhaps the best suited to a mob which could not itself offer other resistance to Bradlaugh's doctrines than that of violence.

On the second evening the mob outside were even more violent. Bradlaugh's host and hostess were yelled

and hooted at; then, when Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Watts appeared on the scene, several stones were thrown, one hitting the head of a respectable Wigan tradesman. Inside, however, all was quiet and orderly; but towards the end the Rev. J. Davis made his appearance, and spoke with such energy that in stamping the platform he fractured one of the boards. A local paper, the *Wigan Examiner*, in describing the scene, was very wrath with Bradlaugh because he held up the splinters, and requested the reverend gentleman to be more gentle in his demonstrations.

When the meeting was over, Bradlaugh was informed that the mob outside were waiting to initiate him into the mysteries of "purring," and to honor him with a presentation, which, if not of plate, Bradlaugh imagined might still be sufficiently striking in its character to have evoked painful reminiscences. He therefore elected to make his exit by a back door, where, however, he found some thirty or forty roughs who had foreseen this manœuvre, and who at once commenced a loud concert of yells and hisses. Bradlaugh walked slowly home, with the mob at his heels. At last, in a narrow alley, some one contrived to give him a kick in the leg. As quick as lightning, Bradlaugh turned round on the mob and dared them to repeat the offence, and again they shrank back in the presence of so much determination. As Bradlaugh's name was shouted from street to street the women and children, some of them only half-dressed, crowded to the windows to hiss as he passed. Two bricks were thrown at him; one crushed to pieces on a wall, and the other destroyed the shape and gloss of Bradlaugh's hat. After this he reached the hospitable house of his friends; and every time Bradlaugh returned to Wigan he found the opposition more and more feeble, thus by sheer determination founding a party where once he had but enemies.

At Norwich Bradlaugh overcame similar, though not such violent, opposition; his first visit was greeted with yells, hisses, abuse, and a little mud and a few stones. Nevertheless, a few earnest Secularists gathered round Bradlaugh, and there were some Christians, generally

Nonconformists, who had the fairness to allow him even justice with themselves. The result was, that the Secular party grew, and in a few months they had funds enough to hire a chapel, which they converted into the Eclectic Institute, and where they organised Sunday evening lectures and debates for entire winter seasons. At Yarmouth similar results were achieved; and thus in all parts of the country Bradlaugh was laying the foundation of the power he now possesses.

CHAPTER VIII.

Leaves Business—Lectures for Garibaldi—Secret Despatches—Walls with Eyes—The Papal Police and Bradlaugh's Revolver—A Yankee to the Rescue—Religious Persecution at Guernsey—A Challenge to the Authorities—Bradlaugh his own Bill-poster—Gentlemen Rioters—Mobs and Menaces.

SUCH active propaganda work as that described in the last chapter would not have been possible if Bradlaugh had been compelled to attend regularly at an office. In 1857, after remaining some three years in the service of Mr. Rogers, he left this employ, in order to be "articled" to Mr. Harvey, a solicitor. This change turned out most unfortunately. Mr. Harvey was plunged in money difficulties, and his arrangement with Bradlaugh was not only brought by force of circumstances to a premature end, but Bradlaugh found himself also involved in considerable pecuniary liabilities. As misfortunes never come singly, ill-health was now the next adversary that beset Bradlaugh's path. He was laid up with rheumatic fever, and when once he recovered he left the city altogether. From 1858 to 1861 Bradlaugh worked in the provinces, visiting town after town, establishing Secular Societies wherever he went, and preparing the ground for the delivery of lectures.

All this time he was burdened with the debts that accrued from his unfortunate connexion with Mr. Harvey, and these were soon to be increased by heavy lawsuits. In the meanwhile, his comparative freedom from business occupations enabled him to devote a great portion of his time, not merely to the propaganda of Secularist opinions, but to delivering lectures in support of Garibaldi. At each of these meetings Bradlaugh invited his audience to subscribe funds on

behalf of the Italian patriots, and was able to send in all a hundred guineas which he had thus collected. This gift elicited a special letter of thanks from Garibaldi, who did not fail to recognise the good work Bradlaugh had done for his cause. Nor was Bradlaugh's acquaintance with Italian affairs limited to the books and letters he had read on the subject. He found means of visiting the country on several occasions.

There was a combination of business and political interest that caused him to undertake these journeys, and thus they proved doubly attractive. He did not, however, always escape from those dangers which, abroad more than at home, beset politicians. The police were soon put on the alert when Bradlaugh arrived in Italy, and they evidently kept a keen watch over his every movement. Thus it was ascertained that Bradlaugh, who was at Naples, had received a packet of political letters a few days after Bomba's fall. It has been said that walls have ears. In this case they evidently possessed eyes.

Bradlaugh was in the room of his hotel, alone, and, as he thought, safe from all observation. A friend then entered, and without any conversation of a nature that could be overheard, gave him the packet which he had volunteered to take over to England with him. Though as a rule not devoid of prudence, he so little suspected any danger on this occasion that he took no special precaution. He left Naples in a steamboat sailing under the flag of the two Sicilies, and all went smoothly, excepting the ship, till they reached Cività Vecchia. Here, to the surprise if not to the alarm of the passengers, a boat-load of Papal gendarmes came on board. Even at this moment Bradlaugh was not yet on his guard, and had the gendarmes at once made for his portmanteau they might have seized the despatches.

The sub-officer preferred, however, resorting to what he doubtless considered a very clever stratagem. He politely inquired for Mr. Bradlaugh, whom he discovered with so little difficulty that it is probable he knew perfectly well the principal characteristics of his

general appearance. With much politeness, this officer informed him that the British Consul wished to see him on shore. This at once put Bradlaugh on his guard. If he went on shore he would be on Roman soil, subject to the Papal laws, and there was no guarantee for his safety. On the other hand, he did not know the English Consul, and had no business with him. Evidently this was but a mere trap, so Bradlaugh with equal politeness, refused to land, and hastened down to the cabin, where he had left the portmanteau that contained the despatches.

It was not long before he was joined by the full force of the Papal gendarmes, who proceeded this time with less ceremony. They ordered him to show his luggage, and evidently knew that it contained the secret despatches. Bradlaugh now understood that he had been betrayed. Yet no one at Naples could have seen him when he received the letters, and the walls alone could have seen the transactions, unless a hole had been made through them and a watch kept on all his actions. This, in fact, is the only explanation that can be given of the circumstance.

In answer to the demand for his luggage, Bradlaugh at once produced his English passport, and assumed that this would suffice to shield him from further annoyance. The document was, however, treated with the profoundest contempt, and the Papal police now prepared to break open the portmanteau. In vain Bradlaugh protested that he was under the flag of the two Sicilies, that he was not under nor subject to the Papal laws; the Papal gendarmes were undeterred by any such arguments. The position was becoming desperate, and Bradlaugh found himself terribly outnumbered; but he had learnt the value of coolness, determination, and audacity.

Without any more argument he set himself against his portmanteau, drew a heavy, six-chambered naval revolver from the voluminous recesses of his coat; cocked, and aimed at the nearest Papal gendarme. He then simply and quietly promised to blow out the brains of the first individual who attempted to touch his luggage. In spite of this threat a rush might have

been made. Bradlaugh was surrounded by foes, and might, in any case, have been attacked behind. But at this juncture an American, who had been watching the whole incident with considerable interest, was so delighted at the "Britisher's pluck" that he suddenly snatched up a chair, and springing forward, took up a firm stand back to back with Bradlaugh, crying, while waving the chair about with fearful energy: "I guess I'll stand by the Britisher!"

This turn of events somewhat startled the Papal gendarmes. They did not like the look of Bradlaugh's formidable weapon, and the American had destroyed all chance of seizing him by surprise from behind. They were numerous enough to overcome this resistance, but not without a serious risk of loss of life, and they hesitated for some time how to proceed.. At last they resolved to shirk the responsibility on others, and go on shore for further instructions. The moment they had left the ship Bradlaugh employed this reprieve in bringing all the pressure possible to bear upon the captain, who was, after some trouble, persuaded to put on steam, and sail out to sea before the gendarmes had time to return. A few days later Bradlaugh reached London, and had the satisfaction of delivering the letters, and of receiving the thanks and the praise which were the just but only reward for his firm conduct.

While alluding to Italy, it should perhaps be noted that during the voyage Bradlaugh began drinking light clarets. This he did only under the urgent advice of his doctor, and after his severe attack of rheumatic fever. Thus, though still an ardent advocate of temperance, Bradlaugh ceased to be a teetotaller.

During the year 1861, as during the previous years, Bradlaugh travelled all over England, and not only combated virulent opposition, raising the voice of Freethought where its echo had never been heard, but by his zealous advocacy he came into conflict with the law, and was, therefore, involved in several suits which absorbed much of his time and cost large sums. Bradlaugh had shown at Wigan, at Norwich, and at many other places that mere mobbing, yells,

and brickbats would not prevent his steady work. Where the audiences were disorderly he appeared again and again, till he had taught them better manners. But now new methods were to be employed against him. He was to be threatened with legal proceedings, in the hope that the man who scorned a brick might fear a writ!

The first incident of this sort occurred at Guernsey. Here a partisan (Mr. Bendall) had been prosecuted for distributing some of Bradlaugh's pamphlets, on the ground that they were opposed to religion, and condemned to a fine of £20. This sentence Bradlaugh conceived to be altogether unjustifiable, and he at once determined to test the question by renewing, in the most accentuated manner possible, the offence, which could only be punished under the old Blasphemy Laws. On the 10th of January Mr. Bendall had been fined, and a few weeks later Bradlaugh sailed for Guernsey; and after a capital passage reached the little island, where he found Mr. Bendall anxiously waiting him on the pier. A royal salute of rotten eggs, he hurriedly warned Bradlaugh, had been prepared to welcome him, and a most Christian lady had subscribed, he was authoritatively informed, a large sum for the purchase of these traditional emblems of a people's wrath.

When Cardinal Wiseman visited Guernsey he had to run the gauntlet in an open boat under a heavy fire of rotten eggs, and even worse missiles were used to express the islanders' detestation of Popery. In spite, however, of the preparations Bradlaugh was fortunate enough to escape for the moment. Yet there could be no mistake as to the course he intended to pursue, for he caused the following handbill be freely circulated the day before his arrival:—

"To M. le Procureur, to the Clergy (especially of the Methodist New Connexion), and to the public of Guernsey:—

"Gentlemen,—I shall lecture in the Assembly Rooms, on February 27th and 28th, when I shall endeavor to prove that the Bible is not a revelation from an all-perfect Deity * * *

"I am especially induced to visit you, because I have

heard, with feelings of deep regret, that you, M. le Procureur, and you, gentlemen of the clergy, have permitted to-day the revival of an institution belonging to an ignorant past, and have evoked the law to defend a religion which, if from God, should need no such paltry aid, but should stand impregnable, because true.

"You who were parties, active or acquiescing, in the late prosecution of Mr. Stephen Bendall, I challenge you to defend your faith in free and fair discussion. You have no resource; you have entered the lists with the weak weapons of persecution, and I invite you to retrieve your honor, if you dare, by selecting your means of defence from a more potent armory—that of honest, manly thought."

Bradlaugh's first visit on landing was to the Assembly Rooms, which had been previously hired for him; he found, however, that the proprietor now refused him admittance, and would give no sort of explanation for thus breaking the contract. It was therefore necessary to engage another room, and this was done satisfactorily; but there now arose other difficulties. The printer refused to print any bills, and the town crier could not be induced to make any announcement. Having foreseen these impediments, Bradlaugh had taken the precaution of having bills already printed in London, and these he had brought with him; but there was still another obstacle, no bill-poster would undertake to put them up.

This petty warfare was not calculated to overcome such a man as Bradlaugh. It only amused him. His mission was not to be baffled by a bill-poster; and therefore Mr. Bendall and Bradlaugh both sallied forth, armed with paste-pot, brush, and ladder, and guided by the bright moonbeams, had soon advertised the forthcoming lecture on all the prominent hoardings of the town. Bradlaugh's next action was to address a letter to all the persons who had taken part in the prosecution of Mr. Bendall, inviting them either to prosecute him for the forthcoming repetition of the offence, or if not, to tender an apology to Mr. Bendall.

All this was done on a Tuesday; on the Wednesday intense excitement reigned throughout the town. Some one, evidently more orthodox in religion than in spelling, had chalked on the walls: "Down with

the Infidles"—"Away with the Infidles!" Two boards, on which the lecture was announced, were torn away from the hotel door, and were with difficulty recovered. At last the hour of the lecture approached, and Bradlaugh found the street near the hall crowded with people, but nobody hardly dared enter. Throughout the whole island Bradlaugh had but one friend, one person to help him. If the mob, infuriated by drink and fanaticism, should attempt, as it had been urged, to throw him into the sea, there was but one friend on whom he could rely. It was impossible, under those circumstances, to establish a door-keeper, money-taker, and a system of control. Free admission to the hall became a necessity.

No sooner had Bradlaugh begun to address the empty benches than the crowd outside, unable, or probably unwilling, to control their curiosity, precipitated themselves into the building, which they soon filled to excess; even the staircases were crowded, and many persons outside were unable to gain admittance. When once Bradlaugh was fairly launched in his subject he was interrupted by a terrific uproar in the streets; then followed a battering of the shutters, groans and hoots, cries and menaces resounded on all sides. For twenty minutes Bradlaugh sought to weather the storm by mere force of lungs, trusting that his voice might be heard above the din; but at last he determined to go out, and seek to appease the people. Begging those who were in the hall to keep their seats, he left the platform. Some persons endeavored to persuade him that it would not be safe for him to go outside alone, but as there was no one to accompany him, he went and found a huge mob, composed of a number of well-dressed persons, who were encouraging a number of lads to break the shutters with some stones. As Bradlaugh walked up to them they ran away; then a stone was thrown, and passed wonderfully near his head. Thereupon all the men, women and children set up a tremendous shout, in which cries of alarm and yells of execration were duly mingled. Bradlaugh, unable to make himself heard in such a din, bowed respectfully and walked towards the crowd,

and the mob actually fell back step by step as he approached. One man, however, a stranger, stepped forward and begged Bradlaugh to return to the hall if he valued his life, advice which he ultimately followed.

His appearance outside seems to have produced good effect, for on his returning to the lecture the noise was not so great, and it finally subsided altogether. The bulk of the audience were evidently favorably impressed by the address, and at its conclusion Bradlaugh publicly repeated the offence for which Mr. Bendall had been punished, by distributing about one hundred tracts on "What does the Bible Teach?" Though the people inside frequently applauded the lecture, the crowd outside accompanied Bradlaugh home with cries of "Kill the Infidel," "Murder the Infidel."

The second day the excitement had greatly increased. Bradlaugh was warned that the quay porters had been persuaded to attack him; a threatening mob was stationed for the better part of the day outside his hotel, and among these the porters were more especially noisy, but their fury was due not so much to the spirit of religious fervor as to the spirits in the libations with which they had been plied. Through this sea of indignation Bradlaugh had to push his way to the hall, where, however, he found a very respectable audience waiting for him, and during the first twenty minutes they listened with marked attention to his lecture, which was this time on the New Testament.

Outside, some respectably-dressed individuals had been exciting the mob, and suddenly the latter made a rush at a plate-glass door, burst it open, and came tumbling and screaming into the room. Many of these interrupters were quite drunk, and Bradlaugh, descending from the platform, found it no easy matter to turn them out of the hall again. Nevertheless, he went up alone to the most obnoxious among them, and conducted them to the door. It must be said, also, that the sympathies of the bulk of the audience were now with Bradlaugh, in so far as they resented this unmannerly interruption of the right of meeting.

When this weeding was partially accomplished, Bradlaugh once more resumed his lecture, to be again interrupted by an attempt to turn the gas out, and by the breaking up of several forms and chairs. At last he concluded a more or less imperfect address, and then walked home amid new cries of "Kill the Infidel," "Pitch the Infidel into the sea." But no one, somehow, seemed inclined to commence the attack. His size and evident strength intimidated the people. Strange to say, the authorities had permitted drink and leave of absence to a large number of soldiers, who were more especially noisy and riotous; and there is no knowing how matters would have ended but for the adroitness displayed by Madame Laval, the landlady of the Hotel de l'Europe, where Bradlaugh had taken rooms. With great coolness she pretended to show Bradlaugh a better way out of the hotel, but in reality led him into a dark room, where she locked him up for a couple of hours, till the excitement had subsided.

On the ensuing Friday Bradlaugh left Guernsey, with the mob still hissing at his heels. No prosecution was attempted against him; but his expenses were heavy (they included the damage done to the hall), and his receipts were *nil.* Mr. Bendall and a gentleman of French extraction were the only persons who helped to defray these costs.

In July of the same year, Mr. Barker, Bradlaugh's co-editor, visited Guernsey, and was well received, no one attempting any violence. No proceedings were taken against Bradlaugh, and the authorities recognised tacitly that they had been in the wrong. The battle was therefore most successful, so far as Bradlaugh was concerned, and there is now a regular Freethought party in the island.

CHAPTER IX.

A Lecture Prohibited—Bradlaugh Arrested—The Police Court—The Police Entrapped—Proceedings against the Police—A Prejudiced Verdict—A New Inquisition—Appeal—Debt and Work—Increasing Popularity—Riots at Dumfries—Riots at Burnley.

BRADLAUGH had barely escaped from the dangers and annoyances incident on his visit to Guernsey, when he found himself involved in a new series of troubles. He had been invited, while at Plymouth, to extend his lecturing to Devonport. The park of that town was open to preachers of all denominations; the people were in the habit of meeting there, and it was urged that Bradlaugh ought also to make himself heard on this spot. The Devonport Young Men's Christian Association took, however, an altogether different view of the subject. Pressure was brought to bear on the authorities, and when Bradlaugh made his appearance he was met by the Superintendent of Police, who informed him that for the moment all preaching had been prohibited. As Bradlaugh knew that he was at a military station, under military, and not under common law, he at once submitted, but determined to do better next time.

Mr. Steer, acting as the representative of the Plymouth and Devonport Secular Society, rented a field near to the park for the purpose of delivering two lectures, and obtained a regular receipt, in which all the details were entered. Bills announced the event, and Bradlaugh found a good attendance. The Superintendent of Police had called on Mr. Steer, and endeavored to make him cancel the contract, and, failing in this, was also present at the meeting. The proceedings had barely begun, and Bradlaugh had not had time to say more than these words, "Friends, I am about to ad-

dress you on the Bible," when the Superintendent came forward to arrest him.

Bradlaugh naturally objected to such interference, and urged that he had a receipt for the renting of the field, and therefore possessed property rights. This protest was met by six policemen, who for all answer attempted to make him secure. Two held each arm, and the remaining two devoted themselves to the close supervision of his coat collar. One of them (D 19 were his letter and number), ran his knuckles into Bradlaugh's neck in a most objectionable manner. Bradlaugh found himself altogether in a trying position. His first anxiety was that of restraining the anger of his followers, whom he feared would compromise the whole affair by committing a breach of the peace. Then he had to quell his own temper, which certainly the police tried their best to excite; and finally he had to display sufficient strength to show that after all he would not endure too much violence. Thus when he had appealed to D 19 several times to desist from hurting his neck, Bradlaugh was compelled at last to send his elbow into the policeman's ribs with just that amount of force necessary to inculcate a sense of prudence. In fact it was not till the police were made aware, by physical demonstrations, that Bradlaugh was strong enough to break loose and knock one or two of them down, that they treated him with comparative gentleness.

When once they had expelled him by force from the field, Bradlaugh attempted to return and continue his lecture, and he was consequently re-arrested and conducted to the police-station. Bail was of course soon forthcoming, but was most unfairly refused, and Bradlaugh consigned to a cold stone cell, with no fire or light, chair or stool. For about three hours he remained in this cheerless imprisonment, when, by the intercession of influential friends, he was allowed to come out into the corridor or lobby, where he found at least a stove and a light. Here he met Mr. Steer, who had endured a similar fate, and had been locked up in a separate cell, for interfering on Mr. Bradlaugh's behalf.

The next morning they were taken into Court, passing through a trap-door into the prisoners' dock, and following on the footsteps of an unfortunate felon who had been locked up in a neighboring cell during the same night. But a hearty burst of cheering greeted Bradlaugh and his friend when they first appeared, making them feel that it was an honor rather than a disgrace to be thus persecuted for seeking to propagate what they considered to be the truth.

It was soon discovered that a legal blunder had been committed; Bradlaugh could not be prosecuted for his opinions, for no time had been allowed him to express any opinions. A charge of "exciting a breach of the peace, and assaulting the constable in the execution of his duty" was then manufactured. Two lawyers appeared against Bradlaugh. Seven magistrates sat on the bench, who were certainly not predisposed in his favor. The charge was false, but still it was at first well maintained, and might have been successful, for all the evidence of the witnesses in Bradlaugh's defence was refused on the ground that they were unbelievers. Fortunately several Nonconformists, who were indignant at the pious perjury of Bradlaugh's persecutors, came forward, and their evidence turned the case. Bradlaugh had defended himself and his companion in misfortune, Mr. Steer, and wrung a verdict of acquittal from the reluctant bench of magistrates. After this success, Bradlaugh announced in full Court, that he would deliver the lecture that had been interrupted to an audience assembled in the borough, and sue the superintendent of police for unjustly arresting him.

In the conduct of his case, Bradlaugh elicited the warmest praise even from his adversaries. The *Western Morning News* stated that "his examination of the witnesses was conducted with a facility and with a regularity explained only by the fact of his having been educated for the legal profession. He sustained his equanimity of temper in an admirable manner." The *Devonport Independent* described the large crowds collected round the doors of the Court, the difficulty of gaining admittance, the comfortable seat given to Mrs. Bradlaugh and two lady friends on the Town

Council benches near the dock, the enthusiastic cheers that greeted Bradlaugh's appearance, the stern intervention of his worship the Mayor in favor of order. "There was," adds this paper, "a large number of gentlemen, including many dissenting ministers of various denominations; but while they declared against the principles that Mr. Bradlaugh professed, they could not help admiring his remarkable precision, his calm and collected demeanor, and the ability with which he conducted his own case as well as his friend's." . . . "The only matter of regret by the majority of those present was that he was pursuing a career which they regarded as a decided perversion of a powerful intellect."

The first of Bradlaugh's threats was soon and cleverly carried out. He had declared that he would address a Devonport audience in spite of all that the authorities might do to prevent him. After a consultation of war an expedient was discovered, and the following announcement circulated all over the town :—

"In consequence of advice received, 'Iconoclast' will deliver an open-air address on Sunday afternoon, and will be present near the Devonport Park Lodge, about half-past ten, in order to vindicate the right of free speech."

This notice gave rise to the impression that Bradlaugh intended to lecture in the park, or that he had hired a three-cornered field, from the owner of which the police had probably failed to obtain any information. In any case, when Bradlaugh reached Devonport Park Lodge, at the appointed time, he found a large and eager crowd assembled to hear him, and to see what would be the upshot of this defiance of the authorities. Everything had been prepared to again arrest Bradlaugh. Mr. Superintendent Edwards, followed by twenty-eight policemen, was known to be on his road to the meeting-place. Some soldiers, even, were held in readiness to quell whatever riot might result from Bradlaugh's arrest.

But, instead of stopping in the park, Bradlaugh, followed by an immense crowd of people, who were in no wise deterred by a fierce downpour of rain, made his way to Stonehouse Creek, a small tributary of the

River Tamar. Here, amid expressions of surprise, he embarked on a little boat, rowed out to a larger boat, moored within nine feet of the shore, on which a sort of platform had been contrived, and then at once began his address. A few moments later, Superintendent Edwards and his twenty-eight policemen burst through the crowd, but when they saw the position that Bradlaugh had taken up, the bitterness of their disappointment was altogether beyond the power of description. They knew full well Bradlaugh had found out that though Devonport, Stonehouse, and Plymouth form together a garrisoned and fortified town, divided by the River Tamar, yet all the water to the sea comes under the separate jurisdiction of Saltash, which is some miles further on! Roars of laughter, jeers and cheers further added to the disconsolate look of the Superintendent and the Mayor, who was also on the spot, armed with the Riot Act, which, doubtless, he would have been glad to read.

To add to their discomfort, Bradlaugh bowed with profound reverence to the Superintendent, told him that he was there, in spite of the police, to assert the Englishman's proud right of free speech, and offered him a free ticket to his lectures at the Free Institute, where he would be more comfortable than out of doors in the storm and rain. He also declared that whenever he returned to this neighborhood it was his intention not to go away without addressing a Devonport audience; and if he was excluded from the green fields or a comfortable building, which he was always ready to hire, he would lecture, as on this occasion, to an audience assembled in the borough of Devonport from a vessel placed out of their jurisdiction.

Infuriated at his defeat, Superintendent Edwards now sought to revenge himself on the boatmen; but here also precautions had been taken. The boat had been hired on the previous Friday, and the owner had no knowledge whatsoever for what purpose. In the meanwhile the publicans of Devonport, profiting by the absence of the police, did a large business in the sale of spirits and beer during the hours of divine service.

After his acquittal by the Devonport magistrates, Bradlaugh had written to Mr. Edwards, but the Superintendent informed the messenger who brought him the letter that he would take no notice of it, and that it should simply be thrown in the waste-paper basket. Bradlaugh, therefore, put the case in the hands of Mr. Leverson, the well-known solicitor, who had so ably conducted the defences of Simon Bernard, Mr. Truelove, and Tchorzewski. Initiatory steps were taken to bring the matter to trial in the Superior Court, by an action for assault and false imprisonment against Mr. Superintendent Edwards.

This announcement caused a great sensation at Devonport. The Watch Committee and the Young Men's Christian Society took up the cause of the police; but in the meanwhile the only result of their efforts to suppress Bradlaugh was to increase the public curiosity, and his lectures were consequently attended by especially large, attentive, and respectable audiences. In fact he could never have produced so great an impression so soon, or won so many partisans, but for the injudicious interference with his right of speech.

The trial relating to this affair came off at the Exeter Assizes, Nisi Prius Court, and certainly the case at issue was an important one, not merely on account of its bearings on Bradlaugh, but as an abstract question which touched upon the liberties of every Englishman. Indeed, how could it be maintained that because a town happened to be a garrison town the police should be able, even in times of profound peace, to institute a sort of censorship over the speeches delivered in a park where it was customary to hold public meetings, and even to arrest individual speakers whose views they did not approve. Unfortunately, Bradlaugh, in disputing this matter, was persuaded to have counsel, and Sir Robert Collier, who was entrusted with the brief, commenced his speech by expressing sorrow for his client's opinions. This introduced the religious element into the matter, and as Bradlaugh had to deal with a special jury, composed of Devonshire landowners, they only gave him

a farthing damages. It is somewhat difficult to explain their verdict. After a long trial, Bradlaugh won his case easily. It was proved that apart from the deprivation of liberty, Bradlaugh had incurred a direct loss of £7 15s., and yet the jury would only award nominal damages. Probably the jury thought the plaintiff was legally right in bringing the action, but, being an Atheist, must be morally wrong. They therefore attempted to strike the balance between what they considered legal right and moral wrong, by giving a favorable verdict, but only allowing a farthing damages.

This decision naturally occasioned the greatest indignation. It was qualified by the *Morning Star* as "a flagrant denial and mockery of justice."

"Why," asked the same paper, "should not Sir Richard Mayne drag a London editor from his desk, if Mr. Superintendent Edwards may, at the cost of a farthing, take Devonport lecturers to prison? It appears that the plaintiff in this action puts forth his opinions, from week to week, in a newspaper or magazine; and as he has been fourteen years a lecturer, he must in many places find a platform and an audience. In Devonport, it seems, he had been refused the use of every public building, and it was then resolved to pull him out of his own hired field. We could not have supposed it possible that such a thing would have been done within the borders of this island; and we do not believe that, if the case be taken to a second trial, another jury will be found to give a verdict in favor of such rampant persecution."

According to *Punch*, by the fact of

"Magistrates becoming judges of controversy, and the policeman enforcing their decrees, the office of justice of the peace will become a holy office indeed, and the constabulary will rise into familiars of a British Inquisition."

Encouraged by these and many other newspapers, Bradlaugh determined to take the matter before a superior Court, and to leave no stone unturned till he had thoroughly vindicated his rights to enjoy freedom of speech, whatever the character of his views. He, therefore, ultimately carried the case to the Court *in Banco*, and, unaided, pleaded there for two days before Lord Chief Justice Erle and a full bench of udges. This did not very materially improve Brad-

laugh's position, but it produced a great effect on the public, and raised an outcry in favor of free speech. Further, the Borough authorities were now compelled to face weighty legal expenses; and all this trouble, these repeated trials, the enormous amount of public criticism brought to bear on the action of the Borough authorities, served as a warning to all Local Boards and administrations throughout the country. It was felt that henceforth it would be dangerous to trifle with Freethought lecturers, and especially with Bradlaugh. A less stubborn resistance might have made the position of the party far more difficult. As it is, when Bradlaugh visits Devonport, Plymouth, or Stonehouse, he can now obtain the largest halls, and these are always crowded with attentive audiences.

This lawsuit added, however, to the extent of several hundred pounds, to the debts which had resulted from Bradlaugh's unfortunate connexion with Mr. Harvey. In the contest he had not received any general support. Mr. Joseph Barker, his co-editor, set his face against the collection of subscriptions, so as to fight the matter out in the law courts. Bradlaugh received, however, considerable sums from a fervent though anonymous friend, who made it his or her duty to help him in his arduous struggle.

These various lawsuits brought Bradlaugh into constant relation with Mr. M. R. Leverson, who had been solicitor for Bernard, and this ended in his return to business. Mr. Leverson offered Bradlaugh "articles," and again, this time for two years, he worked in a solicitor's office. During that period he continued, nevertheless, to edit the *National Reformer*, and on Sundays only used to lecture in the provinces.

The *National Reformer* was in itself, however, growing to be a matter of some importance. The first year's income amounted roughly, in donations, to £19; in shares, to £211; in advertisements, to £16; and in the sale of the first forty-six numbers, to £1,274. All expenses paid, there remained close upon £300 cash in hand. It is not often that papers depending upon such slender means, and depending almost exclusively on their sale for their income, can show so favorable

a balance sheet after so short an existence. But the sensation Bradlaugh was creating throughout the country is sufficient to account for this. In the early part of 1861 he had his adventures at Guernsey and Devonport, which have been described at some length, and which served to make his paper and work known; but there were many other smaller disturbances that all contributed to win supporters.

Thus, immediately after his triumphant contest with the authorities at Devonport, Bradlaugh became the cause of riots at Dumfries and at Burnley. Fanaticism is a very contagious complaint. If it happens to attack ever so small a knot of people, it soon spreads, and sets a town aflame, and there is no knowing when this complaint may break out. Sometimes Bradlaugh, on reaching a town where he was announced to lecture, found that all was perfectly quiet. Those persons who were interested in the subject which he had selected to discuss came, others came out of curiosity—they were pleased or not, according to their tastes and opinions; and the meeting was more or less enthusiastic, and there the matter ended. On other occasions it happened that some persons, indignant at the promise of a visit from Bradlaugh, would busy themselves in exciting the passions of the mob, or of certain classes, and hence hostile demonstrations arose, which often concluded in riot.

The idea of opposing Bradlaugh with his own weapons, those of plain, straightforward argument, did not so often suggest itself; and it is to this spirit of intolerance, of wild, riotous fanaticism, that Bradlaugh owes much of his popularity and the sympathy he has elicited. Many persons of broad and tolerant views would not have been so ready to listen to him but that they felt it incumbent on them to show that they, at least, did not belong to an unjust and noisy mob.

Thus when Bradlaugh, after leaving Devonport, arrived at Dumfries, he at once perceived, when riding from the station to the hotel, that the town was in a state of great excitement. Later in the day he started for the hall where he was to lecture a full half hour

before the time, and yet the streets were already thronged with multitudes of agitated people. He had not gone far when someone rang a bell, which was evidently meant for a signal, as at that very moment there arose a chorus of yells and groans and other expressions of displeasure. At the door of the hall an individual who was distributing tracts pushed Bradlaugh rudely back, just as if he, and not the lecturer, had rented the place. When Bradlaugh finally managed to gain admittance, he found the handsome hall already half full of people. Near the platform there was a little door, which the mob were attempting to force open, and Bradlaugh had to devote the time remaining before the lecture to the careful barricading of this aperture. When he began to speak, however, the siege continued and the noise drowned his voice. He had to content himself with speaking at intervals, and only delivered the substance of his lecture.

After a while the gas lamps outside the hall were smashed, and then stones came crashing through the skylights. Fortunately the glass was for the most part so thick that it resisted the greater number of the stones. The hall was not lit by side windows, but from the roof, otherwise serious injury would have been done. When Bradlaugh's friends left the mob kicked and struck them as they made their way through the crowd outside the hall, but they reserved their best energies for Bradlaugh, whom they threatened to kill. Bradlaugh had been further informed that the police did not intend to afford him any protection, and as he was unarmed he thought it better to wait till the excitement had appeased. But it seemed as if this effervescence was not likely to subside, and Bradlaugh was losing patience when, a little before midnight, a person came and conducted him out through a cellar which communicated with the hall and gave into a back street.

Once in the street, Bradlaugh found himself entirely alone in a strange town, not knowing his way, and fearing that if he went to any well-frequented street he might be recognised and attacked. The position was not agreeable. Walking on a little way he reached

the river side, and there discovered a spot which was not illuminated by gas, and where he might watch the passers-by without being himself seen. After waiting some time Bradlaugh determined to push forward to the hall, thinking that the people must now have dispersed, and that if once he reached the hall he should be able to find his way to the hotel. When, however, he arrived in the street leading to the hall, he met two men and two women, who at once recognised him, and ran at full speed to warn the crowd of persons still standing waiting for him. There was not a moment to lose. Turning down a steep dark street, Bradlaugh hastened back towards the river before the alarm was given. On his road he met a policeman, and determined to walk by his side, in the hope that he would afford him some assistance, or might, at least, be a witness in case of assault.

While he was proceeding thus two men passed, looked at Bradlaugh, exclaimed "That's him," and stopped short. Yielding to a strange impulse or instinct, Bradlaugh suddenly left the policeman and walked up to them, and before he had time to settle in his own mind what he should say, they shouted : "We are friends!" Overjoyed at this unhoped rencontre, Bradlaugh related all his adventures, and was then informed that his friends were, on their side, in a great state of anxiety about him. They had divided into parties of two, and were ransacking the whole town in the hope of finding him. Eventually they met one of these couples a short distance farther on, and dividing this small force, two of the party walked a little ahead to see that the road was clear; Bradlaugh was thus finally conducted to his hotel in safety.

Ten days later, Bradlaugh was expected to lecture at Burnley, and a few days before his arrival, his opponents posted an announcement on all the walls of the town relating that he had been mobbed at Dumfries, and indirectly exciting the people of Burnley to treat him in the same manner. Bradlaugh's friends at once issued a reply, admitting the mobbing, but appealing to the Burnley people not to be led into following this bad example. The mob, however, had already been

organised, and very serious consequences would have ensued but that Bradlaugh's friends showed they were also strong, and above all, well disciplined and united in purpose.

Inside and outside the hall there was a great concourse of people, and during Bradlaugh's lecture it was evident that the people could scarcely contain their excitement. When Bradlaugh concluded, Mr. Riley, a Methodist, came on the platform, though he refused to be bound by the rule that allowed each speaker ten minutes. He persisted, when the ten minutes were over, in talking in an irrelevant and offensive manner in spite of the Chairman's calls to order. In answering these appeals, he said he would talk as long as he liked, and say what he pleased. At last, after twenty minutes had been thus expended, Bradlaugh determined that the time of the meeting should no longer be wasted. He therefore took hold of the speaker, and by the exercise of a little gentle pressure forced him back to his seat.

This served as the signal for the riot. All the Burnley Methodists who were in the hall rose to their feet, and with one spring cleared the entire platform. Bradlaugh was thrown off backward, and found himself sprawling on the floor of the hall, with a mass of human beings struggling over him. His first thought was to secure some position where he might breathe, and avoid being crushed to death. But he had not reckoned on the strength of his friends. They were as prompt to rescue as the others were to attack. Bradlaugh soon found himself safe again, and was accompanied back to the hotel by a body-guard strong enough to defy his enemies. Also, it must be said, that the authorities at Burnley did their best to maintain order, while at Dumfries they had, if anything, encouraged the mob. But at both towns Bradlaugh met with the most touching marks of devotion and personal attachment. Hundreds of friends were ready to risk their lives to protect him against the fury of his fanatical adversaries. They thrust themselves forward to receive the blows aimed at him; they risked their ribs in the most fearful crushes; they remained unmoved

under a fire of stones; and they were ever ready with words of good cheer and hearty encouragement.

After the above outburst, the fury of the mob at Burnley soon spent itself. Many persons were, in fact, ashamed of their own conduct; and Bradlaugh's second lecture, delivered a few days later, did not occasion any further disturbance.

CHAPTER X.

The Oath Question—Mrs. Maden's Case—Godwin on Oaths—Bradlaugh in the County Court—Bradlaugh's Evidence Refused—The Northampton Church Rates.

DURING this time a certain amount of agitation was spreading concerning the right of Freethinkers to give evidence in law courts without taking the oath. Sir John Trelawny, after working hard for the abolition of Church rates, though not himself a Dissenter, now began to move in the matter of oaths. Having objected to the tyranny of enforced payment, he now raised his voice against compulsory oaths. The more reverent and earnest among Christians were also beginning to feel that oaths were so commonly administered, and to persons holding such a variety of opinions, that the solemnity of the oath was degraded, and they therefore concluded in accepting the imperative prohibition of Scripture, "Swear not at all." At Edinburgh, a respectable youth named John Armour, taking these words in their literal sense, refused to swear, and was therefore sent to prison for a month because he would not give evidence, or rather because he objected to take the oath necessary on giving evidence. Quakers and Separatists—men, that is to say, who belonged to an organised sect, were allowed to affirm; but the conscientious Christian, who maintained his right to an individual opinion, was, in this free country, sent to prison because he refused to disobey the order given in Scripture, "Swear not at all."

To take an oath and kiss the Bible it was necessary, not so much to believe in the Bible as to believe in an avenging deity. "What will become of you when you die?" said one of our police magistrates to a youth of fourteen, who was witness in a prosecution for robbing

a shop. "I don't know," replied the boy; "I am not old enough to be certain about it." "Where will you go to if you tell a lie?" said another police magistrate to a little girl five years old. "I shall go to 'ell," was the prompt reply; and the magistrate at once took her evidence. At Brecon a man was tried for murder, and the principal evidence against him was at first rejected, though afterwards admitted, because the witness was vague as to the attributes of the deity, and thought that "perhaps he might" punish her if she did not tell the truth.

A strong feeling was arising in favor of the old Judaical form of adjuration. If the judge or priest solemnly adjured the witness in the Most Holy Name to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, the effect would be far more impressive. This would put a stop to the drone of the crier, ending in: "S'elp you God." The adjuration could not fail to impress those who do not object to the oath, and would seem more solemn than the ordinary one; while, on the other hand, it would be a powerful appeal to the conscience and better feelings of those who do object. Thus would be abolished what should never be tolerated in a free country—the questioning as to the nature of a man's belief. This should be a matter between each individual and his conscience. To allow such a subject to be investigated by judge or jury is to allow a species of intolerance; it is a mild form of inquisition. Then, again, so long as strong religious prejudices continue to exist, the jury will be apt to regard the evidence of persons before them in a more or less partial manner, according to what their views may be. This tendency was clearly demonstrated in the case of Bradlaugh *v.* Edwards.

At the close of the year 1860, a trial arose at Rochdale concerning the wrongful detention of a piano. The case was one of unfortunate family difference, aggravated by the fact that Mrs. Maden, the plaintiff, formerly a consistent and respectable Wesleyan, and for some time a pupil teacher, had now become a consistent Atheist. When in the box, the defendant asked Mrs. Maden whether she believed in a future state of

rewards and punishments, and when she answered in the negative, the following dialogue took place :

The Judge : You don't believe in any human responsibility for telling a lie ?
Witness : Yes.
His Honor : Except to society ?
Witness : No.
His Honor : Do you believe in a God who can punish you for telling a lie ?
Witness : No.
His Honor : Then I cannot hear you. I nonsuit the plaintiffs, with costs of defendant's advocate. If people will insult public opinion in a court of justice they must take the consequences.

This sharp, rude language elicited the warmest sympathy for the lady who had been thus treated. Subscriptions were collected, the matter was brought before a superior court, the papers published a number of articles on the subject, and the case of Mrs. Maden became a power in the hands of the Freethought party. The unfavorable decision of the superior court still further demonstrated the necessity of legislation on the subject ; and though the Bill introduced by Sir J. Trelawny was rejected, still there were but few instances in which any measure of a similar kind had been so well received on its first presentation to the Parliament.

On this question Godwin had long before very clearly expressed an emphatic opinion, and his declaration is still important by reason of the source from whence it was derived ; it was couched in the following terms :

" Can there be a practice more pregnant with false morality than that of administering oaths in a court of justice ? The language it expressly holds is, ' You are not to be believed upon your mere word ; ' and there are few men resolute enough to preserve themselves from contamination, when they are accustomed, upon the most solemn occasions, to be treated with contempt. To the unthinking it becomes a plenary indulgence to the occasional tampering with veracity in affairs of daily occurrence, that they are not upon their oaths ; and we may affirm, without risk of error, that there is no cause of insincerity, prevarication, and falsehood more powerful than this practice. It treats veracity in the scenes

of ordinary life as unworthy to be regarded. It takes for granted that no man—at least no man of plebeian rank—is to be credited upon his bare affirmation; and what it takes for granted it has an irresistible tendency to produce.

"Wherever men of uncommon energy and dignity of mind have existed, they have felt the degradation of binding their assertions with an oath. The English Constitution recognises in a partial and imperfect manner the force of this principle, and therefore provides that, while the common herd of mankind shall be obliged to swear to the truth, nothing more shall be required from the order of the nobles than a declaration upon honor. Will reason justify this distinction? Men will never act with that liberal justice and conscious integrity which is their highest ornament, till they come to understand what men are. He that contaminates his lips with an oath must have been thoroughly fortified with previous moral instruction, if he be able afterwards to understand the beauty of an easy and simple integrity."

This high conception is not likely to be accepted in the Courts till enforced by the law. Bradlaugh himself was also soon involved in a case in which the oath difficulty afforded his adversaries an easy means of defeating him. A shorthand writer at Wigan claimed a sum of money from Bradlaugh in payment for writing a report of one of his discussions; but Bradlaugh refused to pay the entire sum because the reporter had sent a similar account of the proceedings to a local paper, though it had been stipulated he should not let anyone else have the same material. The matter was of little importance; but whatever its merits or demerits, it was never settled, for the oath question brought the dispute to an untimely conclusion. Bradlaugh fought hard against this disqualification, which debarred him from obtaining justice; and as the question has so recently been revived, though in a very different arena, it may not be out of place to produce the account of this, Bradlaugh's first public struggle respecting his right to enjoy, in spite of his views, the same privileges as his fellow-countrymen:—

Mr. Mayhew, who represented the plaintiff, said: Before Mr. Bradlaugh is sworn, I must take leave to ask him a question, Sir. Mr. Bradlaugh, you must not consider that what I am going to ask is intended to be offensive to you;

but as a person taking part in the administration of the law in Courts of Justice, I feel it incumbent upon me to put to you a question which I am sure you will answer truly and honorably. With regret I ask you if you believe in the religious obligations of an oath?

Mr. Bradlaugh: I object that before I am sworn—

The Judge said that no objection could be made to the question. After the oath was taken there could be no objection made.

Mr. Bradlaugh: Then I think there is a proper form laid down in the case Jacobs *v.* Laybourne, in which questions affecting my competency must be put. I will show one necessity for it. Supposing I make an untrue answer, the Court has no power to punish, but under the mode there laid down there is a power to punish.

The Judge: That cannot be, for no person can be indicted unless he take an oath in some judicial proceeding, which is relevant to the question at issue.

Mr. Bradlaugh, on being again asked for a reply to the question, said: I have another objection, and that is, that under an Act of Parliament now in force it is a penal offence to admit I do hold certain opinions; and I do object to answer any question which will render me liable to a criminal prosecution.

The Judge still held that the question must be put. He did not wish to put it strongly, but he must do it. It was a disagreeable thing to him.

Mr. Bradlaugh: I state, in the words of one of the decisions, that I consider the oath binding upon me.

The Judge: Do you believe in a future state of rewards and punishments?

Mr. Bradlaugh: I state, in the words of a case decided——

The Judge: Do you believe in a future state of rewards and punishments?

Mr. Bradlaugh: According to the reported opinion of the law of the case——

The Judge: This is not arguable.

Mr. Bradlaugh: Permit me to refer you to the case in which it was decided it was sufficient if there was a belief in a future state of rewards and punishments in this life.

The Judge: It is absurd to talk of a future state in this life. Do you believe in a future state of rewards and punishments?

Mr. Bradlaugh: I still object; I am not bound to answer the question.

The Judge: You won't answer the question?

Mr. Bradlaugh: I am ready to be sworn.

The Judge: That is not the objection.

Mr. Mayhew read the following extract from "Taylor on Evidence:" "Persons insensible to the obligations of an oath from defect of religious sentiment and belief, are also incompetent to testify as witnesses, because the very nature of an oath presupposes the belief in the existence of an omnipotent, supreme being, who is the rewarder of truth and punisher of falsehood; without this belief the person cannot be subject to that sanction which the law deems an indispensable test of truth."

The Judge: I have so much reverence for the name of what I consider the Supreme Deity, that I do not like to put the question: "Do you believe in the existence of a God," because to me, whether by education or whatever it may be, I always think that to use that name at any time, except there is an extreme necessity, is to use it in vain, and there is a command which, according to my belief, tells me not to do it. I did not wish to put it so strongly in the first instance.

Mr. Bradlaugh: I will then ask you, under the Common Law Procedure Act of 1854, which admits affirmation, to permit me to affirm.

The Judge: It is given to Separatists and some persons who have a religion, but do not like to take the oath as administered in courts of justice, to affirm.

Mr. Bradlaugh: I think you will find it extends to those persons who have conscientious scruples.

The Judge: Conscientious scruples to taking the oath? There are Quakers who say "yea" and "nay" are quite sufficient. They have conscientious scruples. In the same way, the Jew has a conscientious scruple to taking the oath as administered in a Christian court of justice. He is permitted to take his oath in a peculiar manner, but that is because he acknowledges the existence of a Supreme Deity. If the Jew was allowed to do so after having acknowledged whether he was a Sadducee or a Pharisee, it would be different. You are not a Separatist, Jew, or a foreigner, taking the oath in a peculiar manner, as the Chinese, Persian, or Japanese; and I am obliged by the law to do it.

Mr. Bradlaugh: Then I understand you cannot permit me—

The Judge: Only give me a direct answer.

Mr. Bradlaugh: I am not answering your question at all. I have objected on two grounds, both of which your Honor has over-ruled, and I am not bound to answer the question.

The Judge: If you put it in that way, I should be sorry to exercise any power that I believe I possess according to law. You won't answer the question?

Mr. Bradlaugh: I object that I am not bound to answer any question that will criminate myself.

The Judge: You will not answer my question: Do you believe in the existence of a Supreme God?

Mr. Bradlaugh: I object that the answer, if in the negative, would subject me to a criminal prosecution.

The Judge: Do you believe in a state of future rewards and punishments?

Mr. Bradlaugh: I object that—

The Judge: Then I shall not permit you to give any evidence at all; and I think you escape very well in not being sent to gaol.

Mr. Bradlaugh said his Honor would, he was sure, from the very kind and feeling manner in which he had treated him during this last unpleasant episode, give to him, in the unfortunate position in which he was placed, the fairest consideration which it was possible to give in a case of this kind.

Bradlaugh then explained his case, but as his evidence could not be taken, the verdict went against him.

In the month of November another curious trial took place on Bradlaugh's account, though he was not directly involved in the dispute. Bradlaugh, it has been seen, originally visited Northampton in 1859, and since that date he was in constant relation with that town. At first the local papers had described him as a "boy," a "young man;" they dilated at length on his "juvenile appearance." His want of education was especially denounced by those who had never heard him lecture nor read his works. But soon he became very popular in the town, and gained some notoriety for his attacks on a local clergyman, the Rev. Sydney Gedge. According to an old Act of Parliament, this clergyman had the right to collect tithes or church rates, but his predecessor finding that such a tax gave great offence to the parishioners, he judiciously abandoned the practice.

With less wisdom and moderation, Mr. Gedge had resolved to revive his rights in this respect. He seized on the property of even his poorest parishioners, he sent bailiffs about and distrained even the most trifling articles, notably warming-pans, pieces of bacon, note-paper, etc. This naturally supplied Bradlaugh with the material for a fierce, scathing denunciation. Bradlaugh addressed various letters to the Rev. Sydney

Gedge, and published them in the *National Reformer*. One of them commenced in this strain :

"REV. SIR,—I congratulate you on your adherence to the Jewish and Christian principles, as especially advanced in your new attempt to spoil the Egyptians resident in your parish. I have read with satisfaction your notice threatening to enforce payment of your vicar rate. It is a fair evidence of the love you entertain for your flock. The more cash you can collect from them the less attractions will they find in the world and its vanities." . . . "You are a good and faithful shepherd, doubtless, but you have more regard for the wool than for the sheep, and have an open eye for the shearing."

It was by banter of this description that Bradlaugh so added to the Vicar's unpopularity and irritation, that he at last took proceedings against Mr. Bates, the newsagent who sold the *National Reformer* at Northampton. While, however, the case was pending, Mr. Gedge published an attack against the defendant in the *English Churchman*. Thus, while he claimed the protection of the law, he took the law into his own hands by abusing the defendant. The verdict was therefore given in favor of the defendant, and the Reverend plaintiff had to pay all the costs, amounting to about £100. This was probably the first time that anyone suffered any serious legal penalty for attacking Freethinkers, and the decision inspired the Secularists with great hopes that their claims for equal justice would, perhaps, prove successful in the long run.

CHAPTER XI.

A Declaration of Principles — Business Enterprises—The American War—A Message from the Lower Regions—Clerical Courtesies—The Reform League—The Hyde Park Railings—Death of a Secularist—Arrested at Huddersfield—A Tory Solicitor Defeated.

THE years 1862 and 1863 passed without any remarkable incident. Bradlaugh was then in business with Mr. Leverson, and this and his failing health compelled him to abstain, in a great measure, from public action. Indeed, at the end of 1863, he found himself obliged to give up the editorship of the *National Reformer*, and to entrust its management to Mr. John Watts. This severance, though but temporary, from a paper which he had managed with success for three years, became the occasion for a few striking parting addresses. One in particular is worthy of reproduction, as a specimen of Bradlaugh's style and as a declaration of his views. It was published in February, 1863, and the following is a portion of the article in question :—

"In Manchester, on Sunday week, friends gathered from all parts. From Liverpool, Birkenhead, Ashton, Oldham, Altrincham, Shaw, Staleybridge, Rochdale, and their neighborhoods; morning, afternoon, and evening, familiar faces flocked into the Assembly Rooms of the Free Trade Hall, and many a hearty hand-shaking greeted the lecturer on the way to and from the platform. In looking at the thousand eyes which sparkled with approving recognition from all parts of the hall, one forgot illness, anxiety, toil, and trouble, only remembering that the effort of the moment was appreciated, and only desiring that it might be permanently useful to the cause. It is now not less than thirteen years since my first Freethought address in Bonner's Fields, but during my lectures in the Free Trade Hall Assembly Rooms, my memory went back to those outdoor gatherings in Bethnal Green; and now

my pen hesitates while I ask myself who shall write the report of my final lecture, and where and when shall that be spoken? I am an Infidel, a rough, self-taught Infidel. What honors shall I win if I grow grey in this career? Critics who break a lance against me in my absence, will tell you now that I am from the lower classes, without university education, and that I lack classical lore. Clergymen, who see God's mercy reflected in an eternal hell, will tell you even that I am wanting in a conception of common humanity. Skilled penmen will demonstrate that I have not the merest rudiments of biblical knowledge. I thank these assailants for the past; when they pricked and stung me with their very waspish piety, they did me good service, gave me the clue to my weaknesses, laid bare to me my ignorance, and drove me to acquire knowledge which might otherwise never have been mine. I pray the opposing forces to continue their attacks, that by teaching me my weakness they may make me strong. Some (who have no taste for the excavating, tunnelling, and levelling work, but are vain of having shaken hands or taken wine with the chairman of a completed line of railway) say: 'Oh! a mere puller down!' Is this so? I have preached 'equality,' not by aiming to reduce men's intellects to the level of my own, but rather by inciting each of my hearers to develop his mind to the fullest extent, obtaining thus the hope, not of an equality of ignorance, but of a more equal diffusion of knowledge. I have attacked the Bible, but never the letter alone; the Church, but never have I confined myself to a mere assault on its practices. I have deemed that I attacked theology best in asserting most the fulness of humanity. I have regarded iconoclasticism as a means, not as an end. The work is weary, but the end is well. The political prisoner in the Austrian dungeon day by day files at the massive chain and sturdy bar. The labor is serious, but the reward is great. Tell him it is poor drudging work, and he tells you, 'But I toil for freedom.' Watch another captive, how, with an old nail, rusted and rotten, he picks, atom by atom, the mortar from between the stones of his prison wall. Tell him that other men have used more perfect tools, he will answer: 'This old, red rusty nail is to me bright silver lever, powerful instrument, for it is the only tool I have wherewith to toil for liberty.' Tell the backwoodsman, who, with axe in hand, hews at the trunks of sturdy trees, that his is destructive work, and he will answer: 'I clear the ground, that plough and reaping-hook may be used by and by.' And I answer that in many men—and women too, alas!—thought is prison-bound, with massive chains of old church welding; that human capacity for progress is hindered, grated in by prison bars, priest-wrought

and law-protected; that the good wide field of common humanity is over-covered with the trunks of vast creed frauds, the outgrowth of ancient mythologies. I affirm that file, old nail, and axe are useful, and their use honorable—not as an end, but as some means towards the end—for which all true men should strive—that is, the enduring happiness of mankind.

"What honor do I get, what reward do I hope for? Not a red ribbon of some Legion of Honor, given by a crowned knave to repay the faint imitation of his own rascality; but an enrolment, even as the poorest soldier, amongst the rank and file of that Legion of Honor who have been hooted at as heretics in one age and honored as men in the age succeeding. I hope for no peerage such as is won by the right of heirdom to the lady whose painted face and easy virtue have marked her the mother of a line of dukes; but for the ennoblement won by the right of endeavor to upraise myself—won in the endeavor, even if unsuccessful, to be useful to my fellows. My reward—I have it now in the sympathy of Lancashire and Yorkshire factory hands, and in the co-operative approval of the workers of the Midland Counties and North British districts. My honors—I have them in each kind word and wish and welcome. These are flowers which, strewn across the path of life, make it cheerful to the traveller. Atheist, without God, I look to humankind for sympathy, for love, for hope, for effort, for aid. I see that, if the Christian religion be true, and special providence a verity, then, even in the nineteenth century, the Christian God piles snow-flakes on the roof of his own house until the steeple-crowned summit falls in, and crushes beneath its weight the worshippers who unsuspectingly pray to him to protect them from all evil. These unfortunates worship on their knees, and die so. I at least will try to stand upright, and will seek to defy the wrong, and more nobly worship in working to assert the right. If struck down, it shall be while fighting my best in the battle of life. . . . . In this journal, the conduct of which I am now surrendering, I have, to the best of my ability, given free utterance to all who chose to speak. On the platform I have ever done the same; and, whether myself right or wrong, I at least can boast that I have ever sought to submit each opinion to the test of free criticism.

"For the future, who can speak? I trust not to degenerate as I grow older, and I do not think that I shall live to read my reasons for a 'conversion to Christianity.' I do not hope, nor do I desire, to see the various Freethought advocates pursuing the same policy in their teachings; on the contrary, it is from the very diversities exhibited in our advocacies, while our knowledge is as yet limited and imperfect, that I

am led to hope most earnestly for a real and effective unity in the future. Such unity should be based on knowledge reached by different paths, on truth tested by various methods, on fact attained in most diverse fashion. Diversities, what are they? The sower scatters his seed; each grain falls to the soil in its own zigzag way; but it is not the manner in which the grain descends to the earth that we look at, but at the ripened corn ears fit for harvesting."

With these words Bradlaugh withdrew in part from the active work to which he had been accustomed, and devoted himself more to business matters. In the course of the year 1863 he left Mr. Leverson, and opened an office in Great St. Helen's, where he sought to organize several companies. During the Marsala expedition, a quantity of black sand had been discovered, which contained steel and platinum, and this led to the formation of a company, of which Bradlaugh was the nominal chief. The Italian Government gave a concession, of which he was the mortgagee, and his principal object in opening an office in Great St. Helen's was to collect the funds required for carrying out this enterprise. In this he was at first successful. Without appealing to the public a private company was formed, and a steel manufactory started at Castellamare, while at Santa Lucia the same company manufactured pigments. Both these places are close to Naples, and this business rendered it necessary for Bradlaugh to visit Italy several times. They produced steel of the best quality, and Bradlaugh still uses some razors coming from this source, but it seems that the company excelled in chemistry rather than in business; and, after an existence of six years, the society was dissolved and the manufacture was abandoned.

This period coincides with the time of the great American War, and it is needless to remark that Bradlaugh warmly espoused the cause of the North. By his lectures, by his writings he helped to propagate among the masses a strong antagonism against the slave owners of the South. Nor did he fail to devote the proceeds of some of his lectures to the relief of the Lancashire cotton hands, during the famine, which was one of the consequences of the war. In the Irish Church and Irish Land Questions, which were now

also before the public, Bradlaugh had much to say, and they formed the subjects of many lectures. For much of his information he was indebted to his late co-worker and contributor, Peter Fox André, an active. disinterested, and enthusiastic advocate of struggling nationalities.

In this year of comparative quiet, Bradlaugh lectured at Manchester, Sheffield, Huddersfield, Halifax, London, and neighborhood. At Huddersfield, Bradlaugh encountered a new and amusing form of opposition. A very voluble lady came to the platform and related that her son had once purchased half a pound of butter, and brought it home wrapped in a leaf of some unknown work by Voltaire. The leaf was at once thrown into the fire, and the effect was so striking that the lady's son dreamed he saw Voltaire, who appeared with a ball of fire for a head, and another ball of fire for his heart. Voltaire, while thus blazing, informed the lady's son that he was burning in hell, where all Voltairians were sure to join him and share his fate! In spite, however, of these occasional outbursts, Bradlaugh met with but little opposition. But he did not appear very often in public, and the same may be said of the ensuing year.

In the early part of 1865 he lectured at Leeds and Rochdale, and he had a slight passage of arms with a Church of England clergyman, Mr. Verity, who had spoken at Newchurch against Infidelity. One of Bradlaugh's supporters living in the neighborhood, wrote to a Mr. Fielden, under whose auspices the reverend gentleman had appeared at Newchurch to oppose Mrs. Law in her able Freethought lectures, and suggested the holding of a public discussion. This is the reply that was received in answer to a courteous letter, and is a good example of the unfair treatment to which Bradlaugh and his supporters have so often been subjected:

"Newchurch, May 1st, 1865.

"Dear Sir,—I was in company with Mr. Verity yesterday and laid the contents of your letter before him, and although I deem it low and contemptible to take any notice of individuals who are ever and anon crying out against Christianity,

yet for the sake of indulging you in your worse than beast-like propensities, I am instructed to inform you that Mr. Verity is waiting to hear from Mr. Bradlaugh, or any other fool who happens to be so mad as to imbibe your empty notions. Yours,

"Mr. Taylor. THOS. FIELDEN."

To this charming and gentlemanly letter, Bradlaugh only gave the few following words of reply, which, together with the letter, were inserted in his paper :—

"Mr. Verity must be a pleasant man to encounter if he instructed Mr. Fielden to write the above, and in any case the prospect of meeting a teacher, whose disciple pens such an epistle, is an enticing one. My message to him is to accustom himself to a more gentlemanly and less scriptural style of communication. Coarseness is not necessarily a virtue; in a costermonger or a piously miseducated parson it is to be looked for; in a public speaker or a writer it is better avoided."

After this, Bradlaugh had another long discussion with the Rev. Woodman, the Swedenborgian divine at Northampton, and engaged in various forms of paper warfare; but it was not till 1866 that Bradlaugh came once more prominently before the public. The ill-health of Mr. John Watts led to Bradlaugh's resuming the editorship of the *National Reformer*, which had then a circulation of about 2,500, and was not paying its expenses. Bradlaugh, however, assumed full responsibility for the paper, commenced paying the contributors, and infused new life into this venture. He became also more active in the delivery of lectures; and, indeed, the political condition of England and of Europe seemed to invite action. The Austrian war abroad and the reform agitation at home were occupying the minds of politicians; and while Bradlaugh was deeply interested in the reviving hopes of Italy, he had from the very first associated himself with the efforts of the Reform League. Yet when the preliminary meeting of this great social body was held in the lower room at St. Martin's Hall, very few persons were present, and the whole funds of the League did not amount to more than a few shillings.

Mr. Mason Jones mournfully declared that under such circumstances he saw no chance of success, and

therefore abandoned the movement. But with Mr. George Howell for secretary, with Mr. Edmund Beales for president, this small commencement soon led to the achievement of great things. George Odger, "the little man with the great brain;" Mr. Cremer, now the able secretary of the Peace Society; Mr. Lucraft, now a member of the School Board; and Bradlaugh, now a member of Parliament—were among the most active speakers who worked for the League. Before the summer of 1866 this society had held throughout the country more than six hundred meetings and demonstrations, and at many of these Bradlaugh was the principal speaker.

At the monster meeting, held in March, 1866, at St. Martin's Hall, Bradlaugh spoke in conjunction with Mr. Thomas Hughes, M.P., Alderman Lusk, M.P, Mr. Peter Taylor, M.P., and Professor Beesly. He was prominent at the great demonstrations held on Primrose Hill and at Trafalgar Square. At the latter gathering, which was convoked after the defeat of the Reform Bill, there were some 30,000 persons present, and Bradlaugh moved the first resolution. Sir Richard Mayne had declared that the meeting was not to take place; then, alarmed or impressed by the overwhelming expression of public opinion, he changed his mind, and did not, after all, stop the proceeedings.

In the provinces Bradlaugh frequently organised meetings, and notably at Bristol; and all his services were given to the League without the slightest remuneration, but they entailed, on the contrary, considerable expense, which was gladly incurred for so good a cause. When, finally, Bradlaugh resigned his position on the executive committee of the League, he received from Mr. Beales and Mr. George Howell letters of the warmest thanks for his "loyal" and "useful" services. These letters were all the more welcome, as on religious questions both these gentlemen were opposed to Bradlaugh.

At a later period—that is, in July, 1866—when Sir Richard Mayne issued the notice forbidding the Reform League meeting in Hyde Park, it was Bradlaugh who moved that the League should persist in holding the

meetings, notwithstanding the police notice of prohibition. This bold counsel was opposed by Messrs. Brook, Merriman, Wynn, and Cremer, and it was supported by Messrs. Babbs, Lucraft, Osborn, Truelove, and John Weston, and carried by an overwhelming majority of the League.

The result is well known—the fall of the Hyde Park railings, and the tears of Mr. Walpole. Yet on this celebrated occasion Bradlaugh assumed the part of a pacificator; that is to say, he obeyed, with a spirit of military discipline, the precise orders given by the president of the League. It had been decided that, after doing what was necessary to test the disposition of the police to use force, the demonstration was to separate in twelve divisions, and march back by different routes to Trafalgar Square. The meeting proved a wonderful success, and the proportion of roughs and idlers who gather on such occasions was fortunately small. There were delegates from Plymouth, Halifax, Manchester, Birmingham, and a number of other towns, surrounded by an enormous mass of respectable working men and small tradespeople. The committee approached the Marble Arch Gate in carriages, and then, descending at a short distance from this point, formed a ring round their president, and walked up to the line of police drawn up across the entrance to the park.

The police, however, did not want to discuss the matter. "V. 32," a mounted policeman, backed his horse right on to Mr. Edmund Beales and his friends of the committee—an example which was quickly followed by another policeman. Confusion ensued, truncheons were drawn, and mischief was impending.

The question of the employment of force by the authorities having been thus tested, Mr. Beales then withdrew, followed, more or less reluctantly, by the committee, and called on the people to go to Trafalgar Square. The principal demonstrators, forming an imposing column, turned down Park Lane; but a large number of hangers-on, irritated at the aggressiveness of the police, and probably not over pleased at the very prudent conduct of the leaders of the movement, took the matter into their own hands, and attacked the rail-

ings, which soon yielded to the pressure. Still obedient to superior orders, Bradlaugh sprang into one of the breaches thus created, harangued the people, and succeeded in drawing off a considerable number, who followed him to Trafalgar Square, where a great many speeches were peacefully, and perhaps uselessly, delivered.

The great fact of the day, in spite of the leaders of the League, was the pulling down of the railings, and the practical proof thus given that no amount of police can keep the people out of the Park, if the people are determined to go in.

After this celebrated disturbance, the Reform League continued to agitate the country, holding gigantic demonstrations, notably at the Agricultural Hall; but while busily engaged in all this agitation, a great sorrow clouded over Bradlaugh's life. After a protracted illness, John Watts died. Night after night this leader among the Secularists was tenderly watched and nursed by his wife, by Dr. and Mrs. Sexton, by his brother and Mrs. Charles Watts, by Bradlaugh, and Mr. Austin Holyoake. The history of this sad ending is at least a vindication of the kindly feelings that exist among the leaders of the Secular party, and the funeral was one of the most imposing English Secular funerals that have ever taken place near London. Bradlaugh delivered the funeral oration, and displayed great and successful activity in obtaining material help for the widow and children.

A month after this loss to the secular party, Bradlaugh found himself again the object of a foolish and badly-conducted attack. He had hired the Huddersfield Philosophical Hall for the purpose of delivering three lectures. These were announced for some weeks beforehand, without any opposition being raised; but when, finally, Bradlaugh presented himself at the door of the hall, he found that occult influence had been brought to bear upon the proprietor. The doors were locked and the police on the alert. In vain Bradlaugh tried to force an opening; but the Yorkshire energy of the crowd was roused, and a dozen volunteers sprang upon the door. A huge crowbar was produced, and

with this Bradlaugh worked with so much will that it was soon bent into curious shapes.

The police now made their appearance, and arrested Bradlaugh, and lodged him at the station, where they prudently removed from his person his watch and chain, his keys, toothpick, and other dangerous weapons. But with lively recollections of the dampness of the Devonport police cells, Bradlaugh energetically protested against being locked up, and after much discussion, it was decided that he should be let out if a magistrate would consent to become bail. This was not a brilliant prospect for Bradlaugh, and he had already made up his mind to spend a couple of days in the lock-up, though, to his surprise, his friends did succeed in finding the much desired magistrate ; but even before his arrival Bradlaugh had contrived to regain his liberty. The proprietor of the hall sent up a messenger stating that he would find bail if Bradlaugh promised not to lecture. This Bradlaugh indignantly refused to do. Nevertheless he was allowed to leave the police-station, having only given his word to appear the following Tuesday.

The trial was another victory, for Bradlaugh clearly proved that he had a right to the hall. He had paid, and possessed a receipt for a part of the rent, and had actual possession, for on the previous day a harmonium had been taken in for his lecture. Mr. N. Learoyd, the Conservative solicitor, was specially retained to ensure Mr. Bradlaugh's committal to gaol ; but he was badly beaten, his law proved all wrong, his authorities misquoted, and, finally, Bradlaugh demonstrated that the court where Mr. Learoyd had chosen to have the question tried possessed no jurisdiction in matters of this description. Such gross blundering has been rarely committed, and Bradlaugh was triumphantly acquitted.

CHAPTER XII.

Bradlaugh and the Rev. Charles Voysey—Revolvers in Italy—Bradlaugh and the Fenians—The Proclamation of the Irish Republic—The Clerkenwell Outrage—Watched by the Police—Agitation in favor of Ireland.

SUBJECTED for years to the inconsiderate, discourteous, and often insolent conduct of adversaries, who forgot all rules of gentlemanly breeding when dealing with Bradlaugh, he chanced to encounter, with no small pleasure, at the beginning of the year 1867, an opponent who at last treated him in the proper spirit. Bradlaugh had ventured to write the following words to the Rev. Charles Voysey :—

"I fear to address you at any great length, or to call on you for further reply, because the honest expression of your views must be attended with disadvantage to yourself in the church to which you belong; but, believe me, reverend sir, however widely we of the Infidel party may disagree with your theology, we admire your manhood, we thank you for breaking the conventional bondage which converts parsons into breathing mummies, and we trust that the frank teachings of good men like yourself and other honorable occupiers of the pulpit, may do something to redeem the mass of Church of England worshippers from the utter stagnation of intellect to which badly-read, lithographed sermons have reduced them. You can reach a class who scorn me; you have the advantage of educational polish, which your *confrères* have often reminded me I lack; you speak from a law-protected pulpit—I talk from a statute-prohibited platform. You say that 'Do unto others as you would be done by' is a part of your morality; without discussing whether the precept is more ancient than the Hebrew Pentateuch, and without declaring that by many centuries it preceded the Greek records of Jesus's sayings, I ask you, would you like to live in a free country as we, the Infidels, are obliged to live: forced to obey the law, but by the letter of the law denied its protection, and by the practice of the law administrators, very

often incurring its penalties, and suffering from the disabilities by legal precedent established, and this solely because of our anti-theological utterances? How can you hope to convert the many thousands in our ranks by declaring that love is the keynote of your doctrine, when too often the clergyman, having failed in moving the passions of the class from whom he seeks to obtain verdict of social outlawry against the Free-thinker, appeals to the policeman's truncheon to protect him against the Infidel's reply?—Yours, with best wishes,

ICONOCLAST."

The characteristic, eloquent, and, above all, the considerate reply Bradlaugh received to this appeal merits to be reproduced, in contrast to specimens already given of the virulent and unmannerly treatment he generally experienced, and which, of course, only increased the energy and bitterness of his warfare against the Church :—

"Sir,—I am much indebted to you for your kind and courteous letter in the *National Reformer* of this date (January 13th, 1867). Though I have no objection to give an honest expression of my views, whatever disadvantage to myself might be involved in it, I fear that little good could be gained by a newspaper discussion of the great subjects now under dispute, even had I the time and ability to conduct my share of it properly. I will, however, readily admit that a great many Bible precepts and examples are utterly inconsistent with true morality; and this I have already illustrated in several published sermons. I am aware, also, that the golden rule, 'Do unto others as you would be done by,' was known before the coming of Jesus Christ. But I leave these minor matters to express my heartfelt sympathy for what you call the 'Infidel party' under the civil disabilities which have hitherto oppressed them. I think with sorrow and shame of the stupid, as well as cruel, contempt with which some of my brother clergymen have treated you; and I cannot but deplore the want of respect towards you as shown in the attitude of society, and in the continuance of those nearly obsolete laws which our less enlightened forefathers passed in the vain hope of checking the movements of the human mind. I believe that the founder of Christianity—not of the spurious compound which goes, by the name—would have been the first to condemn our hardness and our insolence, and to welcome all honest efforts to promote the welfare of mankind, however misguided or mixed up with wrong conclusions he might have deemed them to be. If you will pardon what may seem like giving advice, I would respect-

fully ask of you and your associates that you would recognise the dawn of that change which is coming over English hearts in Church and State. Be patient; be true to your own cause, which, as I understand it, is 'the good of mankind,' and you will find that, in spite of all its present faults, our Church will gradually become reformed, will become truly national, and will yet stand as a great shield between you and those whose religious fanaticism is still untamed. There is a danger from which we all alike need to be warned, and I have felt it myself; it is the danger of taking for granted that our views are right, simply because we are persecuted for them. I can do but very little, but that little I will do with all my heart, to remove the stigma which attaches to my order through its blind and senseless bigotry. Hundreds of clergy feel entirely with me upon this point, even while opposing my theological views; but I think we should bear with them for making no sign until their own path of duty is made clear to them.

"Believe me, yours very faithfully,

"CHARLES VOYSEY."

Bradlaugh's theological discussions, maintained on the platform or in the columns of his paper, were varied by occasional journeys to Italy, where business necessitated his presence. His experience with the Papal gendarmes had taught him the advantage of carrying his revolver on such occasions, though this, it appears, was strictly against the Italian law, and on one occasion nearly resulted in serious consequences. The diligence in which Bradlaugh was travelling from Nunziatella to Cività Vecchia, had been entirely cleared out on the previous evening by a band of brigands. Bradlaugh consequently put his revolver in the pocket of the diligence door, where he thought it would be more readily accessible in case of attack. When, however, they stopped at Montalbo for the examination of the luggage and passports, the police discovered the revolver and were about to confiscate it. Bradlaugh at once tried to snatch the weapon back, and got hold of it by the barrel while the policeman held tight to the butt, by far the safest side. In this position a fierce discussion ensued, Bradlaugh expostulating that so long as the government were unable to protect travellers from brigands, they should not object to persons who sought to defend themselves.

This argument only drew reinforcements to the policeman's assistance, and Bradlaugh was seized and held tightly on all sides. Finally, Bradlaugh urged that it was his duty to the Life Assurance Company where he had insured himself to carry weapons, and protect his life by every possible means. This novel argument produced an unexpected and profound impression, particularly when he informed them that he was connected with the Sovereign and Midland Assurance Company. The police respectfully and with minute care noted these names down. What they thought they meant Bradlaugh has never been able to explain; but they at once let him loose, and he triumphantly walked away, carrying with him his cherished revolver.

In England there were more serious difficulties besetting Bradlaugh's path, and these also were not unaccompanied with the danger of violence. Several persons connected with the Fenian movement had, relying on Bradlaugh's legal acumen, resorted to him for help and advice. Bradlaugh thoroughly sympathised with the Irish grievance, though both on principle and on the grounds of expediency, he was opposed to violence. Kelly and General Cluseret and others are said to have brought the proclamation which it was proposed to issue on the occasion of the Fenian rising, and consulted Bradlaugh as to its terms. It proclaimed the Irish Republic, and appealed to the religious and Catholic feelings and the sentiment of race that animate the Irish people. Bradlaugh was opposed to the invocation of religious fanaticism and national prejudice in such a matter, and this much, at least, of his advice was followed. But the proclamation of the Irish Republic was maintained.

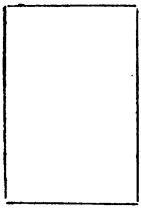
The informers, Massey and Corydon, in their evidence, insist that Bradlaugh himself drew up the proclamation, and certainly it will be seen that the feelings of race and religion to which Bradlaugh took objection were expunged. But it is also very certain that Bradlaugh would have never introduced the first and last sentences professing to establish the Republic. The document, in any case, is a curious one, and, in

consequence of the evidence given by the Government spies will always be associated with Bradlaugh's name. It was printed by Kelly, who was a compositor. He contrived to obtain possession of Mr. Tafery's printing works at Islington, and there, in one night's work, set up this celebrated document :

"I. R.—Proclamation !—The Irish People to the World.

"We have suffered centuries of outrage, enforced poverty, and bitter misery. Our rights and liberties have been trampled on by an alien aristocracy, who, treating us as foes, usurped our lands, and drew away from our unfortunate country all material riches. The real owners of the soil were removed to make room for cattle, and driven across the ocean to seek the means of living, and the political rights denied to them at home; while our men of thought and action were condemned to loss of life and liberty. But we never lost the memory and hope of a national existence. We appealed in vain to the reason and sense of justice of the dominant powers. Our mildest remonstrances were met with sneers and contempt. Our appeals to arms were always unsuccessful. To-day, having no honorable alternative left, we again appeal to force as our last resource. We accept the conditions of appeal, manfully deeming it better to die in the struggle for freedom than to continue an existence of utter serfdom. All men are born with equal rights, and in associating together to protect one another and share public burdens, justice demands that such associations should rest upon a basis which maintains equality instead of destroying it. We therefore declare that, unable longer to endure the curse of monarchical government, we aim at founding a republic, based on universal suffrage, which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labor. The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored. We declare also in favor of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and State. We appeal to the Highest Tribunal for evidence of the justice of our cause. History bears testimony to the intensity of our sufferings, and we declare, in the face of our brethren, that we intend no war against the people of England; our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields—against the aristocratic leeches who drain alike our blood and theirs. Republicans of the entire world, our cause is your cause. Our enemy is your enemy. Let your hearts be with us. As for you, workmen of England, it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by

the oppression of labor. Remember the past, look well to the future, and avenge yourselves by giving liberty to your children in the coming struggle for human freedom. *Herewith we proclaim the Irish Republic.*



THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT."

This proclamation, excepting the sentences underlined, and for which, most certainly Bradlaugh was not responsible, undoubtedly reads more like the argumentative harangue of a thoughtful English Democrat than the wild rhapsodies of an Irish insurgent. It is quite conceivable that, while lamenting an appeal to force, Bradlaugh might have sought to modify what he could not prevent, by moderating the tone of the proclamation, and introducing arguments in the stead of sentences that only incited the passions of race and religion; but his antipathy to useless violence is a strong feature of his character, and in respect to the Irish troubles nothing can be more emphatic than the short leader he wrote and signed immediately after the Clerkenwell explosion. These are the words Bradlaugh employed on this occasion:

"No act could be possibly imagined more mischievous to Ireland than the outrage in Clerkenwell. The worst enemy of the Irish people could not have devised a scheme better calculated to destroy all sympathy, and to evoke the most bitter opposition of all classes. I write, feeling great sorrow, and with the consciousness that I may lose many of my friends for venturing to declare that I have been, and even yet am, favorable to the Irish cause, which will be regarded by a large majority as most intimately connected with this fearfully mad crime. Hitherto the Irish disaffected have refrained from reckless life-taking; the killing of Brett, however deplorable, was the result of the intention to rescue the illegally held prisoners at all costs, and was not, if judged from the Fenian point of view, a wanton and useless sacrifice of human life. For the Clerkenwell havoc I can find no

shadow of palliation. As an escape scheme, it was a piece of insane recklessness, coupled with a barbarous disregard of life and limb. Those who planned it are cowards, for they have struck at innocent and unoffending workmen, women, and children. I believe and know some men in the Irish movement to be brave and earnest, and I appeal to them, and especially I appeal to Cluseret and Kelly, who are publicly reputed as leaders, and who are both able, honest, and intelligent men, to join with me in denouncing and condemning all connected with the planning and perpetration of the infernal devastation at Clerkenwell. C. BRADLAUGH."

In spite of this, or perhaps in consequence of this, Bradlaugh was closely watched by the police. Before the Clerkenwell outrage, but immediately after the Manchester attempt, Bradlaugh's house at Northumberland Park was watched day and night, both in front and behind, by police in private clothes, while two extra policemen in full uniform were kept constantly on guard at the door of the neighboring railway station, where Bradlaugh passed each time he went to town. What could be the use of this strict surveillance it is difficult to explain. In time the authorities wearied of this useless display of force. There was nothing to find out, and if there had been this was certainly not the way to discover the secret. If, however, Bradlaugh did not, as the police seemed to expect, establish a manufactory of bomb shells in his back garden, he was not idle with pen and speech.

One of his pamphlets on the Irish Question, published in 1866, elicited a letter of warm approval from Mr. Gladstone, the only friendly letter Bradlaugh has ever received from the Liberal leader. At meetings and demonstrations he was always ready to plead the cause of Ireland, and to petition for the pardon of those of her sons who fell within the clutches of the law. When Mr. Gladstone came into office, he applied at the Treasury for the withdrawal of the warrant out against Cluseret for his arrest on the ground of treason felony. This was declined, in spite of Cluseret's character as a foreigner. At the commencement of 1878 Bradlaugh proceeded to Ireland, where, in spite of the pressure brought to bear against him by the police, he held several most successful meetings on the Irish

Question, and urged union between the Irish and the English Radicals. One of these lectures on Ireland he concluded with the following stirring appeal :

"To the Irish Republican party also I appeal—to their leaders chiefly—and to them I say : In your hands now rests the fate of many hundreds of the poor and ignorant who will be guided by you, and I plead to you to repress all violence—to check all physical vengeance. It is only the weak who dare be cruel. Teach your opponents that the sufferers are stronger than the oppressors. I do not ask you to present your cheek to be smitten ; but I do entreat you not to be the first to raise your hand to strike. Do not let passion and ambition hurry you into an armed conflict, in which you are overweighted and outnumbered, and in which the families of the poor peasantry who join you suffer more than you do. Be not too wide in your demands. Ask life and the right to live for yourselves and countrymen ; but do not yet challenge the old and crumbling dynasty to fight or die. You cannot expect it to commit suicide, and your weapons are not enough to fight it successfully. Republicanism is the hope of the future ; but we must deal with the reality of the present, and for the present we cannot do otherwise than ask for the enactment of such measures as shall give the land of Ireland on reasonable conditions to the tillers of the soil, and which shall release the nation from the burden of a State Church with which it has no sympathy. Ask this, and the people will support you. Ask this, and England will join you. Ask this, and class interest dare not refuse you ; or should it dare, and should it resort to force to trample on right, then you shall find our sympathy no empty word, and our action no futile pretence. The subject is too grave for threatenings, too sad for bombast ; we are too near a fratricidal struggle. On behalf of Erin, wan, weary, and wretched, I plead to those who wield England's executive power to remember that exacting fierce legal vengeance for rebellion and sedition brings a halo of sanctity to the deeds of the punished, and shame to the memory of the executioner. And I write in hope that the plea of 'Justice for Ireland' will not be addressed in vain, and that the aristocracy, which boasts its high culture, will show its true humanity, and throw open the long-closed floodgates of life to the despairing children of Erin."

Gradually, however, the Fenian agitation died out, and Bradlaugh was ultimately released from the anxieties which resulted from his sympathy for the Irish and his acquaintance with many of the leaders compromised in the insurrectionary movement ; but, even

at this late period, indiscretion in this description would not be altogether safe, as it might still compromise persons who are yet living, and life and liberty are more precious than the most interesting of anecdotes.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Attorney-General *versus* Bradlaugh—Old Press Laws—Government Hesitation—The Attorney-General's Blunders—Debate on Bradlaugh—Government Abandon Prosecution—Renewed Prosecution by the Liberals—More Flaws and More Blunders—The Government Defeated—The Press Free at Last—The Contest for Northampton—Libels—Opposition from all Parties.

THE worst phases of the Fenian agitation had scarcely subsided when Bradlaugh found himself involved in a struggle with the Government. Though the paper was more than eight years old, the Government professed to have just discovered that the *National Reformer* was an illegal publication, and the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue called upon Bradlaugh to give sureties in the sum of £400 against the appearance of blasphemy or sedition in his paper, under 60 Geo. III., cap. 69. The Inland Revenue, therefore, claimed a penalty of £20 for each issue that had appeared; but Bradlaugh replied that he would contest the matter to the last. Availing themselves of an Act of Parliament passed in 1819, avowedly for the suppression of cheap Democratic and Freethought literature, the Government might attempt to kill the *National Reformer;* but Bradlaugh would not allow the paper to commit suicide.

The battle, however, was not to be fought on equal terms. There was the national purse pitted against Bradlaugh's empty pocket. The trained talent of the law officers of the Crown would attack a self-taught and a poor man; but Bradlaugh was not likely to shrink from a contest which Richard Carlile had fought more than a quarter of a century before. Efforts were at once made to collect funds to carry on the defence, and Bradlaugh did not fail to print

in large letters on his paper that it was "prosecuted by Her Majesty's Attorney-General." If Bradlaugh's paper had been sold at sixpence it could not have been prosecuted, as it was only cheap papers that were to be suppressed. Bradlaugh contended that his paper was not a newspaper within the meaning of the Act; and, in any case, it was not more of a newspaper than *Cooper's Journal*, the *Pathfinder*, the *Oracle of Reason*, the *Movement*, the *Reasoner*, the *Secular World*, the *English Leader*, or Charles Southwell's or Robert Cooper's *Investigators*, and none of these papers had given sureties against the publication of blasphemy.

This action was evidently a retrograde movement on the part of the Tory Government, and an attempt to revive the old Act passed to restrain the issue at very small prices and in great numbers of "pamphlets and printed papers containing observations upon public events and occurrences tending to excite hatred and contempt of the Government and Constitution of these realms as by law established, and also vilifying our holy religion." This law had not been enforced for a period of more than twenty years, and its revival was attended with considerable danger. If the *National Reformer* was suppressed many other papers might share the same fate, and there would be an end to our free and cheap press.

In 1855, when Mr. Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Association for the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge persuaded him to bring in a Bill repealing the statutes under which Bradlaugh was now to be prosecuted. Two years later Mr. Ayrton introduced a similar measure, but these proposals were each time thrown out by the House of Lords. It should also be noted that when Mr. Timms was Solicitor to the Board of Inland Revenue, he admitted that there was no general enforcement of the statutes 60 Geo. III., cap. 9; 1 William IV., cap. 73; and 7 William IV., cap. 76. The real fact was that the Government desired to hit Bradlaugh in an indirect manner; they did not dare to attack him face to face, for fear that they would only increase his power and popularity.

The late Lord Derby had declared that he would

personally prosecute Bradlaugh for going into Hyde Park, but somehow or other he never carried out his promise. Mr. Disraeli's Government employed and paid, probably out of the secret service money, reporters to take down Bradlaugh's speeches on Reform and on the Irish question, and these were submitted to the law officers of the Crown, but still no legal proceedings were ventured upon. The Tory papers, notably the *Saturday Review*, urged that the editor of the *National Reformer* should be indicted for blasphemy, but still the Government hesitated. The spies had reported that Bradlaugh was associated with the Irish Republicans and Fenians, and yet again the Government would not prosecute. But now, at last, they had resolved to revive an obsolete Act, and so, by means of a technical offence, to punish him for the open and frank warfare he had carried on against them.

At the very commencement of the proceedings the Government began a series of blunders, by serving on Bradlaugh a copy of information in which they had forgotten to fill in the date. Quick to notice this flaw, Bradlaugh obtained the withdrawal of the information, and though this was but a slight victory on a trivial point, it was an encouraging beginning. This was probably the first time in the history of Government prosecutions that a Crown information had been set aside for irregularity; it further enabled Bradlaugh to gain time.

The next point was that the Attorney-General denied Bradlaugh's right to put in several pleas for his defence, and invoked an old statute of James I. Hastening to Somerset House, Bradlaugh found that the Government lawyers knew less about the law of pleading than he did himself, and that there was no record whatsoever of the Act of James I. He therefore petitioned to have his second, third, and fourth pleas reinstated; and his lordship, Mr. Justice Wills, endorsed the summons with a declaration that Bradlaugh was at liberty to raise on the trial all the questions in the four pleas. After this advantage, Bradlaugh succeeded in disinterring the Act of James I., and read in it that the informant in this was at fault, according to

this Act, for not having taken a corporal oath in some court against him. This point was, however, overruled, on the ground that in such a case the Attorney-General had special and exceptional privileges.

Whoever was responsible for this miserable prosecution had signally miscalculated the power and popularity that Bradlaugh enjoyed. Friends and sympathisers rose in all quarters, petitions flowed into the House of Commons, and an important debate was the result. Mr. Ayrton lucidly explained the law; Mr. Milner Gibson showed that the law had never, for generations, been applied at all against two descriptions of publications, and that for newspapers its enforcement was eccentric and uncertain. He further pledged himself that the prosecution against the *National Reformer* was the first instance of a new and extended application of the Acts of George and William, and that this journal did not, in his opinion, come even within the scope of the statute of William. John Stuart Mill begged the Government not to enforce a law which the House of Commons had twice voted should be repealed.

Nevertheless, the whole power of the Crown was arrayed against a mere defendant in person. Her Majesty's Attorney-General, the highest law officer in England, aided and encouraged by the high ability of the Solicitor-General, would have been enough to terrify most men. The expense of preparing to meet such a force would be ruinous to a poor man, and the Government knew that Bradlaugh was not rich. Yet, after all, after making him incur this great expense, they had so little confidence in their cause that they did not bring it before a jury. The Court assembled, every corner was crammed with eager friends, the defence was ready, and then it turned out that there was not a sufficient number of special jurymen present. The Crown can always compel the attendance of a jury, though in this case not only were no fines imposed on absentees, but the prosecution would not "pray tales," and they knew that Bradlaugh would not do so, as he objected to the validity of the whole of the proceedings, and by "praying tales" he would have waived this objection. The fact was, that the Govern-

ment ungraciously retired from the conflict when they saw that success was no longer certain, and that public opinion was rising against them. The case, therefore, under the pretext that two men were wanting to complete the jury, was dismissed; and this collapse of the Government attack happened on June 13th, 1868.

Bradlaugh's success was, however, short-lived, for in February of the ensuing year, and notwithstanding the advent of the Liberal Government to office in the interim, the prosecution was resumed. Again it nearly broke down for want of a jury; but the Government had the courage of its actions, it challenged an issue by "praying tales," and Sir Robert Collier opened the case for the Crown before Baron Bramwell. He was anxious not to impose fines, but to compel Bradlaugh to register; as the fines had been accumulating at the rate of £20 per copy issued, and now amounted to something like three to four millions sterling, it was quite clear that whether enforced or not Bradlaugh would never have paid them. This time, though Bradlaugh had against him not only the Attorney-General, but the Solicitor-General, Sir J. D. Coleridge and Mr. Compton Hutton, he found that they were blundering in their conduct of the case, and he therefore let them obtain a verdict at *Nisi Prius*, which he knew he could get reversed on purely technical grounds. The matter was now, therefore, brought before Lord Chief Baron Kelly and a full Court sitting *in Banco*.

The third stage of the prosecution took place in April, 1869. No previous press prosecution had ever brought credit to the Crown in this country, and the present case did not prove an exception to this most fortunate rule. Bradlaugh had written a letter admitting himself to be the proprietor of the *National Reformer* of the 10th of April, but the Government had foolishly prosecuted him as being the proprietor of the paper on the 1st of May, and, relying on his letter of the 10th of April, had never thought of providing themselves with sufficient proof of his being the proprietor on the first of May! He therefore obtained a rule on this purely technical point. Further proceedings, it is true, might have been taken against Brad-

laugh, but in the meanwhile a Bill had been brought into the House of Commons by the Government, repealing the enactments under which Bradlaugh was prosecuted, and he received a letter from the Solicitor of the Inland Revenue, stating that the law officers of the Crown would agree to a *stet processus* being entered. Bradlaugh consented to this "absolute stay of all further proceedings," for, as he put it in his reply, "fighting the Crown is a luxury only to be indulged in by the rich as a voluntary occupation."

Thus, in consequence of the miserable failure of the prosecution, the last shackles that limited the freedom of the English Press have been removed. To Bradlaugh appertains the honor of having fought the most recent battle in defence of a liberty dear to the heart of every Englishman. The obnoxious statutes were repealed a few months later, and it is curious to note that Lord Lansdowne, in moving the second reading of the Bill in the House of Lords, spoke of the statute as having never been enforced in modern times, except to gratify a grudge against some particular journal. Had both the Whig and Tory Governments a grudge against the *National Reformer?* In any case, John Stuart Mill wrote to Bradlaugh: "You have gained a very honorable success in obtaining a repeal of the mischievous Act by your persevering resistance." The propriety of reimbursing Bradlaugh for some of his costs never, however, occurred to the Government, though they were beaten, and acknowledged their defeat.

Between the two last great trials of this case, Bradlaugh fought his first electoral contest. He had been invited to stand for Northampton, where, by his fight for the abolition of Church rates, and his many lectures, he had acquired considerable popularity. So as not to divide, however, the Liberal ranks, a great public meeting of nearly 4,000 inhabitants was convoked in the Market Place; and there, on a vote being taken, only one hand was held up against him. Under these circumstances Mr. Gilpin and Bradlaugh alone should have gone to the poll in the Liberal interest. But soon Lord Henley was also on the field, and his candidature,

together with that of Mr. Gilpin, obtained the powerful support of Mr. Gladstone.

Bradlaugh was thus left out in the cold by his own party, and, indeed, nearly all the Liberal organs, excepting the local press, only wrote about him to abuse him, and never to mention the enthusiastic meetings held in his favor. When an impudent individual tried to get a warrant to arrest Bradlaugh at Manchester, where he lectured to some 9,000 persons in the Free Trade Hall, on the ground that a similar warrant had been granted against Murphy, the Protestant agitator, who had occasioned several riots, the news was honored with large type in the London papers. The application was groundless and was refused, yet fully reported, while silence was maintained with respect to Bradlaugh's successes at Northampton. It was felt, however, that a Radical had great chances in this borough, and therefore the Liberals, apparently fearing a Radical more than a Tory, brought in a rival Radical, Dr. Lees, who united the advantages of being a teetotaller and an orthodox Christian. This last stratagem was the hardest cut of all; but still Bradlaugh fought on, and his friends fought for him, notably Mr. Austin Holyoake and Mr. Charles Watts; and those who could not be present sent subscriptions according to the best of their means.

During the struggle libels rained in from all parts. Mr. Capper, M.P., notably, declared that Bradlaugh had taken out his watch at Northampton, in the open square, and defied God to show his power by striking him dead in five minutes. When questioned for his authority, Mr. Capper said he had heard the story from Mr. C. Gilpin, M.P., but the latter indignantly denied that he had ever related anything of the sort. The fact was that the story had been reported concerning Abner Kneeland, some thirty years previously. Bradlaugh, therefore, demanded an apology, which was refused, and this led to an action. Mr. Capper, however, died soon after the writ was served. Another outrageous slander was published by a paper called the *Razor*, and Bradlaugh also proceeded against this journal. After two years' litigation a full apology was given;

but, when obliged to recant, the proprietor became insolvent, so that Bradlaugh's debts were further increased by the costs of this prosecution.

Still there was some consolation to be found in the result of the elections; though, buoyed up by promises that were not fulfilled, they seemed disappointing at first. The result of the poll showed that Mr. Gilpin had headed the list with 2,691 votes. The other Liberal candidate (Lord Henley) had 2,154 votes. The Conservatives then followed on the list—Mr. Merewether with 1,634, and Mr. Lendrick 1,326. Then came Bradlaugh with 1,086 votes, and the other Radical (Dr. Lees), who had been put up to split his party, with only 492. This last announcement was received with well-merited ironical laughter. Both the Mayor and Mr. Gilpin publicly declared that Mr. Bradlaugh fought the battle in a manner calculated to elicit the respect of his adversaries. This unsolicited public acknowledgment came as a grateful balm to smooth the soreness of the fight; and Bradlaugh, at least, felt that he had won his footing at Northampton. In time he thought his party would grow, and recent events have proved that he was not mistaken.

CHAPTER XIV.

A New Temple of Freethought—Bradlaugh and Odger—The Evidence Act at Fault—Fighting Through the Law Courts—Debarred from Justice—The Oath Question Solved—The Cost of Victory—Poverty in Wealth—East End Lodgings—A Reverend Libeller.

CONTEMPORANEOUSLY with the struggle in the Law Courts and the electoral contest at Northampton, Bradlaugh had obtained possession of premises at 142, Old Street, where, little by little, it is difficult to say how, the New Hall of Science was built. In the midst of scaffolding poles, plaster, ladders, etc., Bradlaugh's disciples met Sunday after Sunday, so that the chain of lectures should not be broken; but the new hall was not really ready till the beginning of October, 1869, when a grand inaugural fête was given. In a few felicitous words Mr. Austin Holyoake, who was in the chair, remarked that on examining the dimensions of the hall he felt indeed that theirs was a broad platform! He did not know whether the somewhat irregular way in which the crowning glory of that evening had been brought about was a precedent that ought to be followed, but it had been achieved by the fortuitous concurrence of numerous and harmonious atoms, who met together in the name of the Secular Party, and when they said, "Let there be a hall there was a hall;" and though what sprang from the chaos was not exactly "A thing of beauty and a joy for ever," still it had the merit of being useful, and of leading up to the present more suitable building. The promoters of the hall, in fixing upon that spot, were at least logical, for the *premises* being correct, and the *superstructure* sound, the *conclusion* to be drawn must be satisfactory—and that was, that a really Secular Institute would be developed, with a free platform, class

rooms, Sunday and day schools, library and refreshment department, enabling the full development of the social as well as the intellectual part of our natures.

Effectively the Hall of Science has become the headquarters of the National Secular Society. Here lectures are delivered morning and evening every Sunday. To this large hall are attached a club and institute. In a minor hall a science school is conducted, under the direction of Edward B. Aveling, D.Sc., Fellow of University College, London. Here, and at a laboratory in connexion with the school, the classes are taught by Dr. Aveling, Mrs. Besant, and the two Misses Bradlaugh. There is a fine lending library for the use of members, and a debating society. Nor should omission be made of the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund, founded to render assistance to Freethinkers in distress.

Bradlaugh was invited, soon after the opening of the new Hall of Science, to contest the borough of Southwark, where a vacancy had occurred. The Radicals of this district held many exciting meetings, at which the rival claims of Bradlaugh and George Odger were warmly discussed. The matter became all the more awkward, as Bradlaugh was most anxious to see Odger in Parliament, and Odger was none the less convinced that it would be a great benefit to the country if Bradlaugh were elected. The difficulty ended, however, in Bradlaugh declining to stand against Odger.

In August, 1869, a Bill for the further amendment of the Law of Evidence was passed, and it was at first believed that it would remove the legal incompetency which weighed on Atheists, had rendered their position little better than that of outlaws—so far, at least, as their civil rights were concerned. The Act in question relates principally to evidence given in cases of divorce and breach of promise, and as such it was discussed. The clause admitting the right of Atheists to give evidence was introduced by a side-wind, and passed almost unperceived. It was merely tagged on to the end of the Bill. It is to the effect that: "If any person called to give evidence in any court of justice, whether in a civil or criminal proceeding, shall

object to take an oath, or *shall be objected to as incompetent to take an oath*, such person shall, if the presiding judge is satisfied that the taking of an oath would have no binding effect on his conscience, make the following promise or declaration," etc. In all Sir John Trelawny's measures the point of incompetency was not touched, and, on that ground, Atheists might still have been debarred from giving evidence. When, therefore, the above clause was introduced and carried without discussion, the easy victory was hailed with joy by the Secularists, and more especially by those who, being Atheists, were the most affected. Had the full significance of the clause been generally understood, it is probable that it would not have passed without opposition.

Bradlaugh was soon destined, however, to find that even this new Act did not protect him in all cases. A person named De Rin owed Bradlaugh a considerable sum, and sought, apparently, to profit by the fact that his creditor was a Freethinker, to avoid paying the debt. The claim was based on some bills of exchange, and there is no doubt as to money having been paid for the said bills. At first, De Rin attempted to escape under the pretext of an alleged informality in the endorsement on three bills. The action was tried in 1867, before Mr. Justice Smith. The verdict was given for the plaintiff, subject to a point reserved as to the endorsement of the bills of exchange. They had circulated in France, and objection was taken that the endorsements were not sufficient according to French law. This latter point, when argued, resulted in a decision for the defendant, and a consequent appeal to the Court of Exchequer Chamber. This court desired to know, as a matter of fact, in which country the bills came into the hands of the plaintiff, and the matter was therefore sent before Mr. Prentice, at Chambers, to find how that fact was.

It was at this stage that the flaw in the Further Amendment of the Law of Evidence Act was discovered. When the plaintiff was called to give evidence that the bills came into his hands in London, Mr. Wood, the counsel for the defendant, objected to

Bradlaugh's evidence being taken. The same objection was made at the trial, but the matter was not then discussed, because the plaintiff's evidence was not then absolutely required. In Chambers, on the other hand, before Mr. Prentice, it was indispensable that Bradlaugh should give evidence. In vain Bradlaugh invoked the new Act of Parliament. He was shown that it only applied to persons called to give evidence in any Court of Justice where the "Presiding Judge" might allow them to affirm; but, in this instance, Bradlaugh was in Chambers and not in a Court; before an arbitrator, and not before a judge; therefore Mr. Prentice refused to take his evidence. Thus Bradlaugh found himself once more unable to claim the protection of the law in consequence of his views on religious questions.

This happened in December, 1869. In January of the following year, Bradlaugh brought the matter before the Judges sitting *in Banco* in the Court of Common Pleas, but they purposely avoided giving any real decision as to whether or not Mr. Prentice was right in refusing to take Bradlaugh's evidence. Twice in the course of a week Bradlaugh appeared in this Court to fight the matter. Alone and unaided he withstood the constant fire of four judges, who threw every conceivable legal quibble in his way. These discussions, extending over many newspaper columns will, if studied, show how the whole question was burked, was never really met, but was somehow shuffled out of Court. It was no easy matter, however, to shake Bradlaugh off, as the table groaning under the pile of heavy law books, which the judges found it necessary to consult, seemed to indicate.

On the first day, after trying several expedients to break down the case, the judges finally decided that the plaintiff could not be heard excepting upon *affidavit*. Consequently, though Bradlaugh had been objected to as incompetent to take an oath, he was sent back to swear that he had been prevented from swearing! The second day Bradlaugh was asked for precedents for the Court interfering in the actions of arbitrators, just as if precedents could be found in

January relating to the application of a law only enacted the preceding August. Bradlaugh's was, in fact, the first case of this description. The Court maintained, however, that they could not interfere with the decisions of arbitrators, who were for the time being judges both of the law and of fact, as it would be creating a precedent which might become troublesome. For this paltry reason Bradlaugh was invited to forego his claim, to lose his money, and to pay the heavy law costs into the bargain. It is difficult to understand what judges are for if not to see that justice is done; and is it justice that one man, professing to be a Christian, should be exempted from the payment of his debts because there had been no precedent of an Atheist desiring to give evidence before an arbitrator in Chambers? A decision given to this effect is probably without parallel.

In no way disconcerted by this deplorable result, Bradlaugh determined to carry the matter a stage further; but in the meanwhile he realised that the law itself must be altered, and he was encouraged in his hard struggle by the thought that his case would serve to illustrate the absolute necessity of such amendment. For this purpose he prepared and sent out, at his own cost, more than two hundred petitions to Parliament. This led to the matter being taken up by Mr. Justice Denman and the late Lord Chancellor Hatherley.

One day, during the month of February, Bradlaugh was again involved in a similar discussion—this time with Mr. Russell Gurney, Recorder of the City of London. Bradlaugh had been summoned as a juror, and claimed the right to affirm. The Recorder was of opinion that the Act of the previous session did not give him that right. While this question was under consideration, the whole business of the Court stopped, and law books were being examined on all sides, when a messenger arrived to announce that the Court of Exchequer Chamber had determined to hear that very morning the case of Bradlaugh *versus* De Rin. The Recorder, under these circumstances, graciously released Bradlaugh from further attendance at Guildhall; but on arriving at Westminster, and though

seven judges were sitting in the Exchequer Chamber, Bradlaugh found they thought that in the absence of the Lord Chief Justice of England, they had better not hear the case at present, on the ground that the points to be argued "were of great national importance."

At last, and not before the ensuing May, the trial was brought to a final issue in the Court of Exchequer Chamber, before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, Lord Chief Baron Kelly, and five other judges. Judgment was given promptly and unanimously in favor of Bradlaugh. The Lord Chief Justice prefaced a very elaborate judgment by stating that "the defendant had no merits at all in the case," but relied "only on this somewhat unrighteous defence," and concluded his judgment for Bradlaugh by saying that it was "in accordance with the good sense and justice and equity of the case."

Shortly after this success, the whole matter was set at rest for ever by the enactment of the Evidence Further Amendment Act, 1870, which gave Freethinkers the right to bear witness by affirmation on all occasions. But the cost of the victory was even more oppressive than the great law suit with the Attorney-General respecting Bradlaugh's right to publish the *National Reformer*. The defendant, finding that he was now hopelessly beaten, became bankrupt, and his debt, including interest, amounted to nearly £400. If to this sum we add the enormous accumulation of law costs, it will be readily understood that Bradlaugh's position, financially speaking, was seriously involved.

To Bradlaugh the results of these law suits were indeed most glorious. The one had obliterated from our statute book the last barrier remaining to the perfect freedom of the press, the other ended by banishing from our law courts the last religious disability that could impede the action of justice; but, like many other glories, these actions left Bradlaugh a poor man, crippled with debts and liabilities. Under the stress of these circumstances, he adopted a resolution which demonstrated the determination of his character and the integrity of his intentions. For some time Mrs. Bradlaugh had been in such an uncertain condition of

health that it became necessary for her to reside with her parents. She accordingly took up her abode with them at Midhurst. To carry out this resolve, it was almost indispensable that he should break up his home. His children were sent to school, and Bradlaugh courageously made up his mind to live alone with his work, in a small and extremely modest apartment, or rather in a couple of rooms, which he rented at No. 29, Turner Street, Commercial Road.

To give some conception of what this East End lodging must have been, it suffices to mention that the rent only amounted to three shillings and sixpence per week. Here Bradlaugh worked without ceasing, only laying down his pen to visit his wife or his children. At the same time he lectured in every part of the country. The list of the lectures he delivered at this time is perfectly appalling, and so much labor did not fail to bring in good fruits. Bradlaugh was earning not far short of £1,000 a year, and yet he contented himself with three-and-sixpenny East End lodgings rather than spend more than was absolutely necessary on himself, while still encumbered with debt. In his clothes, at his table, and in his pleasures he was equally abstemious. His whole life was given up to his labor, and to the gradual liquidation of the debts incurred while fighting for what he conceived to be the cause of progress.

For several years Bradlaugh remained in Turner Street. His furniture consisted of a bed, a table, and a few very simple chairs; but there were books on all sides, and even his bed-room was shelved all round and the wall hidden from view by his numerous and ponderous volumes. At the end of two years he was, for want of space to store these treasures of learning, compelled to hire two more rooms in the same house. This, it is true, doubled his rent, but still his yearly rental was under £20, and this is not extravagant for a person earning £1,000 a year!

The proceedings arising from the efforts of the Devonport authorities to prohibit Bradlaugh's lectures had cost £900, and of course the great trials at Westminster were infinitely more expensive, and altogether

beyond the scope of the public subscriptions organised by the Secular party to enable Bradlaugh to fight these different points. Then there were various cases of libel, to which allusion has already been made.

On one occasion, however, damages were not only awarded, but actually paid. A Church of England clergyman had indulged in a foul libel affecting Bradlaugh's wife and children. Bradlaugh proceeded against this individual, and he was not only compelled to retract every word he had said, but was also sentenced to pay £100 damages. This sum did not help, however, to enrich Bradlaugh, for after deducting the costs, he divided what remained among various charitable institutions.

After the trial, the reverend libeller wrote an abject letter to Bradlaugh, begging him not to ruin his prospects of advancement in the Church by publishing his name. To this request Bradlaugh consented, and gave the requisite promise, and it is curious to note what confidence the clergyman placed in the Atheist's word, for it seems that he has never lost an opportunity of rendering himself obnoxious to Bradlaugh. The clergyman in question is a prominent contributor to that very ultra-Protestant organ, the *Rock*, and if he did not possess the very greatest confidence in Bradlaugh's word of honor he would have observed greater reticence, and at least professed more gratitude.

CHAPTER XV.

A Mysterious Visit—Agitation for France—Gratitude of the French Government—Bradlaugh and Prince Napoleon—Arrested at Calais—Bradlaugh and the Commune—Bradlaugh and Father Ignatius—Defying the Government—"Impeachment of the House of Brunswick."

BRADLAUGH was at work in his East End lodgings which have just been described, when, at the beginning of September, 1870, he received a mysterious visit. On this point, Bradlaugh, with that general prudent reserve which distinguishes him when other persons are concerned, refuses to give any information; but from the other side of the Channel, the ensuing details have been obtained.

Surrounded with books, plunged in a maze of papers, sitting in his shirt sleeves, the better to resist the heat and accomplish his work, Bradlaugh's silent labor was interrupted by an unexpected tap at the door.

"Who's there?" he exclaimed in a tone of surprise.

"A woman, and a Frenchwoman," was the somewhat dramatic and unusual reply.

Bradlaugh hastily donned a coat and invited his visitor to take a chair, if, indeed, she could find one amid the litter and confusion of the room. Madame la Comtesse, having thus obtained admission, explained the object of her mission with all the graceful eloquence which distinguishes a French lady; and fixing her gaze steadily on Bradlaugh, she rose, and concluded by saying:—

"You state that you love France, and I know that this is true. You are, it is said, a powerful speaker, and yet you hesitate to save a drowning people."

This mysterious visitor produced a wonderful effect on the course of Bradlaugh's action. The war between

the French and the German Empires had left him neutral. He could not sympathise with either party, but when Napoleon fell his thoughts began to turn towards France; and, stimulated by the entreaties of the patriotic Comtesse, he determined to act. It was the 17th of September when he began to agitate on this question. He at once organised a series of meetings in London and throughout the country, and in these the Positivists, especially Dr. Congreve and Professor Beesley, took an active part.

These demonstrations—notably, the great meetings in St. James' and St. George's Halls—did not fail to influence the Government. Mr. Gladstone became thus aware of a great change in public opinion; and on one occasion he even called on the lady who, by appealing to Bradlaugh, had originated the agitation. Madame la Comtesse was not, however, entrusted with any official mission, and had, therefore, no authority to answer Mr. Gladstone's questions. All she could do was to write to France. Thereupon the Government of the National Defence hastened to send two or three diplomatists over to England, who, however, committed so many egregious blunders that they soon destroyed all the good effect produced on the English Government by the popular demonstrations that Bradlaugh had, in a great measure, organised.

In October, the Republican Government at Tours spontaneously sent Bradlaugh a long and flattering letter, signed by Léon Gambetta, Adolphe Crémieux, Glais Bizoin, and Admiral Fourichon, declaring that they, as members of the "Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale, réunis en délégation à Tours," "tiennent à honneur de vous remercier chaleureusement du noble concours que vous apportez à la cause de la France."

On the 2nd of February, 1871, M. Tissot, the Chargé d'Affaires of France in England, wrote to Bradlaugh:

"Quant à moi, mon cher ami, je ne puis que constater ici, comme je l'ai déjà fait, comme je le ferai en toute occasion, la dette que nous avons contractée envers vous. Vous nous avez donné votre temps, votre activité, votre éloquence, votre âme, la meilleure partie de vous même, en un mot; la France que vous avez été seul à défendre ne l'oubliera jamais."

Finally, in September, 1871, Monsieur Emmanuel Arago, member of the Provisional Government of the 4th of September, wrote on the back of the letter just mentioned the following words :

"En lisant cette lettre, j'éprouve trés vivement le regret de n'avoir pu, enfermé dans Paris, joindre ma signature à celles de mes collègues de la délégation de Tours. M. Bradlaugh est et sera toujours dans la République notre concitoyen."

During the agitation in favor of France Bradlaugh on several occasions visited the Comtesse, who was then staying at the Grosvenor Hotel, but whose name it would be indiscreet to mention. On one of these occasions a gentleman with beard and whiskers, and therefore not easily recognisable, happened to be in the room when Bradlaugh was announced. At his request no introduction took place, and an hour's conversation ensued, during which time Bradlaugh expressed freely all his opinions, and was delighted with the clever replies and conversational powers of the stranger. A little later M. Chevreau entered, and, bowing very low, addressed the stranger as "Monseigneur." This put Bradlaugh on the alert, and in spite of the beard he now recognised that he had been speaking with Prince Jérome Napoleon. The ice was, however, broken, and ever since that day Bradlaugh has always felt sincere friendship and admiration for Prince Napoleon, in spite of his being a Bonaparte.

Bradlaugh imagines, however, that Prince Napoleon has been generally and very widely misunderstood. As a Freethinker, as a man of great talent and independent spirit, he naturally excited Bradlaugh's interest; a feeling which was reciprocated, for Prince Napoleon not only went to hear Bradlaugh lecture at the Dialectical Society, but he visited the Hall of Science on several occasions. On the other hand, when Bradlaugh was able to spend a few days in Paris, he generally visited Prince Jérome, sometimes M. Emile de Girardin, and also the amiable Comtesse, who decided him to take up the cause of France. His intimacy with M. de Girardin exposed him, in 1871, to many attacks from the French Republican party; but Bradlaugh now points to the fact that M. de Girardin

sits in the Republican Senate in consequence of the support given him by M. Gambetta and M. Louis Blanc.

With respect to Prince Jérome, who has recently become the head of the Bonaparte family, Bradlaugh is convinced that he has no ambition to reign over France. He has had many opportunities of witnessing what was passing behind the scenes, and has no belief in Prince Jérome's designs to re-establish the Empire. If, however, he is in this respect mistaken, no consideration of personal friendship would hinder his doing all in his power to prevent the downfall of the French Republican Government. Bradlaugh would oppose tooth and nail any pretender, even though such action were to bring him in conflict with his old friend Prince Jérome.

Active intervention in favor of France did not save Bradlaugh from molestation during the "White terror" established by the Versailles Government. Towards the end of April, Bradlaugh had reason to believe that he might, perhaps, help in stopping the effusion of blood in Paris, by interceding between the Government of M. Thiers and the Commune. Some of the French leaders had suggested the following terms as the basis of negotiation, which it was thought Bradlaugh, as a disinterested foreigner, would more easily be able to propose. The terms were, firstly and foremost, the acceptance of the principle of Republican Government. This was absolutely necessary, for it was well known that the large majority of the Chambers, acting either with the Legitimist or Orleanist leaders, had agreed that the Comte de Chambord was to be placed on the throne with the Comte de Paris as successor. Secondly, absolute and unconditional amnesty for all political offences. Thirdly, the executive power of the Republic to be elected at once by the people. A truce was to be proclaimed during the period of the election, and a disarmament to follow immediately the result was known.

Armed with this project, Bradlaugh landed at Calais, but was at once stopped by the Chief of the Police,

who asked him where he was going, and the following dialogue ensued :—

Chief of the Police : What is your business ?
Bradlaugh: Editor of the *National Reformer*, to report for my journal.
But you are something else besides editor ?
A little.
You are one of the members of the International ?
I have not that honor.
You make great speeches ?
I try.
You presided at a meeting in Hyde Park the other day ?
I did not.
I cannot permit you to go to Paris; your presence there would be too dangerous.
You do me too much honor to attribute to me so much influence.

The Chief of the Police then took down a book in which Charles Bradlaugh appeared in good bold characters, with a number of details in small hand. Bradlaugh was then entrusted to another officer and two subordinates, and sent on in their custody by train to Boulogne, where he reached the Sub-Prefecture at three in the morning. Here he was locked up with his three guardians in a room, and had to sleep as best he could on some chairs, while M. le Sous-Préfet telegraphed to Versailles for instructions. These arrived the next day, and consisted of an urgent and imperative order to leave France by the next packet. M. Thiers' Government showed its gratitude to Bradlaugh by sending him out of the country by the very first steamer.

Some months later, after the suppression of the Commune, Bradlaugh again attempted to visit Paris, and was again arrested—this time at Calais—where he was kept *au secret* for fifty-four hours. Finally he was released and allowed to proceed to Paris, the Commissionaire showing him an order dating back to April, signed by Jules Favre, saying : "Empêchez M. Bradlaugh d'entrer à Paris à tout prix." Possibly the authorities had only forgotten to cancel this order, for since then Bradlaugh has never been hindered in his visits to France.

As a matter of fact, Bradlaugh maintained a very reserved attitude during the whole of the agitation consequent on the Communal rising in Paris. He never advocated the cause of the Commune; the most he did was to urge that the Parisians should be allowed fair play; and when the Commune fell, he sought to collect funds to relieve the distressed exiles. This conduct excited the suspicions of nearly all the French proscripts, and displeased not a few English republicans. So strong, indeed, was this feeling that when he had collected some money for the refugees, the most violent discussions ensued, and it was proposed to refuse what was qualified as the "gift of an English reactionist." The most insulting speeches were delivered by the irate French refugees, and articles published in the *Qui Vive*, their London newspaper, against Bradlaugh, whom they considered at best a Republican of the doctrinaire school, and therefore as antagonistic to their revolutionary ideas as any monarchist.

A somewhat similar impression was produced among extreme politicians when Bradlaugh visited Spain in 1873; but before describing this adventurous journey, a few minor events, that occurred during the two previous years, should not be omitted. To give any conception of the numerous debates, the theological and other books and pamphlets, Bradlaugh held and wrote during this period, would be altogether beyond the scope of this brief volume. With one clergyman, the Rev. A. J. Harrison, formerly of Huddersfield, he debated first at the Town Hall, Newcastle, before an audience of 5,000 people, then at Bristol, where Professor Newman presided over the meeting, again at Birmingham, and finally—but this time according to the Socratic method of debate—at his own New Hall of Science. These discussions so far favorably impressed the Rev. Mr. Harrison that, when it was rumored Bradlaugh's life was in danger, he was the first person to write a kind and sympathetic letter to Mrs. Bradlaugh.

With Father Ignatius Bradlaugh also had some correspondence and a public debate. Alluding to this,

Father Ignatius, when preaching in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, paid Bradlaugh the following tribute :—

"I do not condemn Atheists or unbelievers. I admire them because they have more pluck, more real energy to spread their views than we paltry, trumpery Christians have to spread ours. Oh, if men for Christ would take a lesson from Mr. Bradlaugh; if Christian women would take a lesson from Mrs. Law! If you men were as zealous for Christ as Mr. Bradlaugh is for Atheism; if you women were as zealous for Christ as Mrs. Law is to dethrone Him, Christianity would be a different thing in our land."

The list of Bradlaugh's various works on the books of the Bible, on the lives and doctrines of celebrated Freethinkers, the reports of his great debates, his essays on the early Fathers of the Church, and his political pamphlets, would fill a large catalogue. Since 1869 he had entirely given up business, and left his office in Great St. Helens. The whole of his time, therefore, was devoted to propaganda work, and his achievements were prodigious.

In political matters Bradlaugh protested, by convoking an imposing meeting, against the exaggerated display of loyalty at the recovery of the Prince of Wales from illness. Again, when a meeting had been held in Hyde Park by Odger and his friends, to protest against a grant to Prince Arthur, the Government forbade a second meeting which was announced on the same subject. On hearing of this, Bradlaugh immediately joined the movement, and affixed his name to the notice convoking the second meeting. The Home Office, in reply, not only served Bradlaugh and others with a written notice of prohibition, but threatened and actually prepared to use force. Bradlaugh at once wrote to Mr. Bruce, then the Home Secretary, reminding him that the use of force would be illegal, and would, therefore, be resisted. The Government were not a little perplexed by this challenge, and it was only about half an hour before the meeting actually took place that the idea of interference was abandoned. In consequence of this moderation, the enormous meeting held in defiance of the authorities, passed off very quietly. The people

were delighted at having their own way, and lost sight of the fact that Prince Arthur, on his side, obtained the grant. But if force had been employed to dissolve the meeting, a serious disturbance would have ensued, followed by a national agitation and commotion, which might have seriously compromised the interests and popularity, not merely of Prince Arthur, but of the whole reigning family.

In December, 1872, after Odger, the late Mr. Bailey, a well-known Westminster democrat, and the members of the Universal Republican League had held several meetings in the Park against Mr. Ayrton's ridiculous regulations, and were prosecuted for so doing, Bradlaugh also convoked a meeting on his own responsibility, and invited the Government to prosecute him. The authorities were by that time, however, tired of the whole business, and Parliament annulled Mr. Ayrton's obnoxious regulations.

It was about this epoch also that Bradlaugh brought out his celebrated "Impeachment of the House of Brunswick," and lectured on this subject in the finest halls of England and Scotland, notably the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, the Town Hall, Birmingham, the Town Hall, Northampton, and the City Hall, Glasgow. Bradlaugh is perhaps the first Englishman who has, without tumult or disorder, and in buildings belonging to the various Municipalities, emphatically challenged the hereditary right of the reigning family. Bradlaugh maintained, however, that he had as much right to discuss a possible repeal of the Acts of Settlement and Union by which the electors of Hanover became monarchs of England, as any other Act of Parliament. To use his own words: "It is of course assumed, as a point upon which all supporters of the present Royal Family will agree, that the right to deal with the throne is inalienably vested in the English people, to be exercised by them through their representatives in Parliament." The right to succeed to the throne is a right accruing only from the Acts alluded to, and Bradlaugh is as much at liberty to discuss their repeal as the repeal of any other laws.

"The Convention which assembled at Westminster on

January 22nd, 1688, took away the crown from James II., and passed over his son, the then Prince of Wales, as if he had been non-existent. This convention was declared to have all the authority of Parliament—*ergo*, Parliament has admitted the right to deprive a living king of his crown, and to treat a Prince of Wales as having no claim to the succession."

Such is the stand which Bradlaugh has adopted with respect to English Republicanism, and he looks forward to the day when, by the force of education, and the will of the people, peacefully expressed by their representatives in Parliament, we shall be able to proclaim what even thorough Conservatives recognise to be the ideal form of Government.

[NOTE.—June, 1883. The recent manifesto of Prince Jerome Napoleon, and the interviews between that Prince and the Empress Eugenie, have somewhat modified Mr. Bradlaugh's views as to the present policy and aims of Prince Napoleon. Mr. Bradlaugh regrets that a man so able should allow himself to be temporarily misled by those who hope to trade on the worst associations of the second empire.]

CHAPTER XVI.

The Birmingham Republican Conference—Through the Carlist Country—Upsetting a Train—Captured by the Carlists—Plundering the Diligence—The Dangers of the Road—Public Banquet to Bradlaugh—The Future English Republic—Public Honors at Madrid—Deputations and Serenades.

AFTER the Franco-German war, and more particularly when Sir Charles Dilke boldly declared that he would not fear the advent of a Republic in England, a strong Republican movement manifested itself throughout the country. Several Secular societies and various democratic organisations now adopted Republican titles, and new and special Republican associations were founded. This culminated in the holding of a Republican Conference at Birmingham in May, 1873. No less than eight London societies sent delegates, and forty provincial towns. Thus there were present at this conference the representatives of forty-eight different Republican societies and organisations, actually existing in almost all the important towns of the country, and a great many weaker bodies, unable to send delegates, forwarded letters of adherence. The conference was generally pronounced to be a great success, and concluded by an enthusiastic meeting at the Town Hall. After passing a number of resolutions proclaiming Republican principles, and establishing a National Republican League, Mr. Funnell, representing the German section of a London society called the Universal Republican League, which, in keeping with its name, possessed many foreign members, and took special interest in foreign affairs, proposed :

"That this conference desires to express its sympathy with Spain in its struggle to establish a Republican Government; its abhorrence at the atrocities committed by the Carlists in

the interests of a Monarchical Government; and also expresses its indignation at the non-recognition of the Spanish Government by the British Government; and that Mr. Bradlaugh be empowered to present the same to Senor Castelar on behalf of the conference."

This resolution was unanimously carried, and with the cheers of the Town Hall meeting still ringing in his ears, Bradlaugh started direct from Birmingham for Madrid. Nothing occurred to relieve the monotony of the journey until Bradlaugh reached Irun, except that he dined at the Orleans Station, within a few feet of M. Gambetta, who happened to be there to see some friends off to Bordeaux, This coincidence led to the insertion of a number of paragraphs in Spanish papers, all announcing that Bradlaugh had a long conference with Gambetta previous to taking the train for Madrid.

At Irun, Bradlaugh found that the Carlists had torn up the railway line, were masters of the entire Basque district; that the dreaded priest, Santa Cruz, was reported to be in the neighborhood, and would show no mercy to any foreigner who might happen to fall in his hands. As for conveyances, there was an omnibus which might perhaps start some time or another, and purported travelling twenty miles out of the way, in a broiling sun, with but two broken-down horses to drag the lumbering, dirty, odoriferous, ramshackle vehicle along. This prospect did not meet Bradlaugh's English ideas of rapid travelling. He therefore hired a caléche with two good horses, and explained to the driver that if he stopped voluntarily on meeting any Carlists he should fire at him. Bradlaugh then took his seat, drew his revolver, cocked it, and held it in his hands for the rest of the journey, which was performed at a gallop till they reached St. Sebastian.

Two or three times the driver shouted, "Los Carlistas!" and pointed to some men in blue with guns, hurrying across the fields, but, by dint of whipping, the horses carried the travellers beyond reach. At a village, however, near the Bidassoa, and about mid way between Irun and St. Sebastian, some rough, ragged looking men ran up to the carriage, and one of them, holding a long, sharp, mischievous-looking knife, caught

hold of the door and said something in Basque. Not understanding him, Bradlaugh pointed to his revolver, while the driver whipped the horses ; the whole troop then set up a yell, but finally dropped off. The driver subsequently explained to Bradlaugh that these men were not Carlists, but only thieves. Future experience showed that this was in many cases a distinction without a difference.

From St. Sebastian to Vittoria Bradlaugh was obliged to travel in the coupé of an antiquated diligence, which seemed to have been laid aside ever since the introduction of railways, and was now brought to light again without any attempt at repairs. With one exception, all the passengers were dropped at the earlier stages of the journey. The first hill proved that the break was out of order ; it had not been greased for so many years that it was firmly locked in rust. Great and loud was the shouting before a little oil could be procured to remedy this defect.

Tokens of resistance against the Carlists were not met till they reached Tolosa, where wooden stockades and loop holes bespoke times of war. Soldierly-looking volunteers and a large number of regular troops thronged the streets. Again, at Allegria, the Town Hall and public buildings were fortified by the introduction into the windows of stones roughly mortared, leaving only loop-holes. Between this latter place and Villafranca, Bradlaugh was startled and shocked to find that the Carlists had cut the line near the mouth of a tunnel which they had partially blown up, and this without giving any warning. The result was that the next train from St. Sebastian, carrying as usual a number of passengers, rushed into this ruined tunnel. Two carriages were thrown over the side of the embankment, and the guard's van, falling first, was smashed underneath them. Three other carriages remained on the line crushed one into the other, and still bore ghastly dull stains, that showed how well the bloody work had been done.

"And these are the Carlists' doings," Bradlaugh exclaimed in passing. "This is the work of the divine right Bourbon ! Prayers are said for these infamous

scoundrels in Paris, and subscriptions are advertised for them in the London *Times*. If they had been Communists instead of Carlists, what then ?"

Again at Beasain, Bradlaugh saw a fine railway bridge, which had been cut by the Carlists in such a manner that the trains coming along would be precipitated into the space below. At Zummarraga oxen had to be added to the diligence so as to drag it over the mountains; and here some men were repairing the road, though a strong guard of soldiers protecting the workmen showed that the reign of order had certainly not been re-established. Indeed, the crisis of the journey was soon at hand. Bradlaugh has himself related this story, and it would be difficult to do better than give it in his own words:

"At Montdragon, a new style of fortification met my view. All these cities are built with very narrow streets, and here, in the centre of the principal street, a chamber had been run across from window to window of opposite houses, built shot-proof and loopholed each side and underneath; this clearly proved that, in this neighborhood, the Carlists were looked upon as likely to enter the town itself. At Arichavaletta, where the regular troops were stronger than usual, I was much puzzled by the conduct of the sentries, who first signalled us to stop, and who—when the horses were pulled up for a walk—crossed bayonets to prevent our progress. It turned out that the commanding officer had broken his meerscham pipe, and our important mission was actually to take it to Vittoria to be mended. More fortunate than some of the baggage we carried, it actually arrived at its destination at Ezcoruaza, a small open town, where we made our last change of horses. I noticed that most of the houses were deserted and the doors and shutters fastened; the remaining inhabitants stared at us with a pitying curiosity, as though they knew what fate was in store for us. Candidly speaking, as we had now safely done more than four-fifths of our journey to Vittoria, I began to think that there was now scarcely any risk, and the more especially so as all advices of the Carlists placed them much to the north of where we were. My judgment was inaccurate. The sting of the serpent was in its tail; the last fifth-part of our journey was worse than all the rest. When we arrived at the *Cuesta de Saltnos*, where two roads branched off, a rather good-looking young man in a blue cap and blue blouse sort of uniform, armed with a rifle, a revolver in his sash, attached by a ring to a cord slung round

his neck, and with a bayonet-sword by his side, waved his hand to our driver in the direction of the lower road. This road our diligence now took, our driver saying something we could not hear, and my companion adding to me: 'At last, the Carlists.' About half a mile further, up started, in the middle of the road, as rough a specimen of the human family as anyone could wish to meet, armed and dressed like the previous one. He evidently called on our driver to halt; and as the diligence came to a standstill, two others, worse dressed and badly armed with indifferent guns, joined the first, and I cocked my revolver, keeping it, however, underneath my coat. Our driver chatted to the Carlists familiarly in the Basque tongue, and too low for my fellow-traveller to catch a word. The last who appeared of the Carlists was probably a deserter, as he wore part of the uniform of a private of the 29th regiment. Whether the three did not feel strong enough to attack us, or whether, as is more likely, they had orders to let us pass into the trap carefully laid at the other end of the road, I do not know; what is certain is, that again our driver gathered up the reins, and away we galloped. I uncocked my pistol, and began to believe that the Carlists were a much maligned body of men. About a mile further, a house still in flames, with traces of a severe struggle close to it, again awakened our attention, and in the distance blue uniforms could be seen. At the *fuente de Artaban*, close to Ulisbarri Gamboa, in the province of Alaba, we fairly fell into the Carlists' hands, like fish taken in a net. A party of twelve stopped the roadway, while two kept sentry on the heights close to the road, and some others, whom we could not see, but whom we could hear, were close at hand. Our driver descended, and his first act was to give the leader of the Carlist party an ordinary traveller's satchel bag, with shoulder-straps, which had evidently been brought intentionally from one of the towns we had passed, and which seemed to give pleasure to the recipient, who at once donned it, two or three admiringly examining it. Approaching me, the leader then asked, in the name of His Majesty Carlos VII., in a mixture of French and Spanish, if I had anything contraband. Unacquainted with the tariff regulations of this Bourbon bandit chief, I gave a polite negative, and was about to descend from the *coupé* to see more accurately our new visitors, when, on a signal from the chief, they all laid their guns against a bank, one of the sentries descending to stand guard over the weapons. Curious guns they were—English Brown Bess, old Prussian muzzle-loader, ancient Italian regulation muzzle-loader, converted breech-loader, and blunderbuss were represented. All who wore revolvers had new ones —perhaps bought by the funds subscribed by the London Committee.

"The diligence, which only contained one passenger besides myself and Senor de Churruca, was now literally taken by storm; and at present, seeing that there were no signs of fighting, I preserved an armed neutrality, keeping my revolver cocked, but still carefully out of sight under my coat, only moving the pistol case on the strap, so as to have it ready for almost instantaneous use. The first search appeared to be for letters, and I began to quake for one directed, in Mr. Foote's best handwriting, to Senor Castelar, and of which I was the bearer. I soon found that only the chief could read at all, and I much doubt if he could read anything but print. The principle of natural selection seemed governed by the appropriation of strict and large epistles; and even these, after being turned about, were restored to the driver, who, with a slight shrug of his shoulders, looked on as though he had but little concern in the matter. Presently a cry of triumph came from the top of the diligence. Thinking it was my poor black bag, containing the Castelar letter, I pressed forward, but was stopped, and a sentry placed in charge of me. His gun was a treasure, and I consider that if he had meant shooting, there would have been nearly as much danger in the discharge to the shooter as to the shootee. The triumphal shout had been caused by the discovery of two saddles and bridles, which were at once confiscated by his Majesty's Customs collectors as contraband, and despite an energetic protest from the conductor, were carried off behind the rising ground. The next thing seized was a military cap in its oilskin case; uncovered, it was a "thing of beauty," a brigadier's cap, thickly overlaid with silver lace. The Carlist commander took possession of this with almost boyish delight, giving his own cap to one of his followers, who had hitherto been decorated with a dirty rag for headpiece. The oilskin covering of the new cap was thrown to the ground, and one of the band, who seemed to have a sudden attack of madness, drew his bayonet and rushed at the poor cover, furiously digging the bayonet through and through, and crying out in Basque that he wished he had the nigger, its master, then to serve in the same manner. Suddenly and menacingly he turned to myself, and angrily asked in Basque whether the cap was mine. When Senor de Churruca translated this into French, it was too much for my gravity, already disturbed by the mad onslaught on the unoffending oilskin. My thick skull is of tolerably large size, this cap was small enough to have perched on the top of my head. My reply was a hearty laugh, and it seems to have been the best answer I could have made, my interlocutor grinning approbation. Bayonets were now called into work to break open the portmanteaus, of which the owners were absent, and also to open certain wooden cases containing

merchandise belonging to the third passenger. Boots appeared to be contraband of war, and liable to instant confiscation. One pair of long cavalry boots did us good service, for the chief determined to get into them at once, and luckily they were so tight a fit that they occupied his time and attention for nearly twenty minutes, during which period the searchers came to my black bag, and found the official-looking envelope containing the vote of sympathy from the Birmingham meeting. As I was in a Catholic country, and the Carlists were pious Catholics, I adopted the views of the equally pious Eusebius, and shouted lustily, "*Io Inglese, esta mia passeporta.*" The man who held it looked at it, holding the writing upside down, and returned it to its place.

"Fortunately I had no spare boots, and my Carlist friends had no taste for shirts, so I got leave to fasten up my bag. My fellow-traveller, who had a fine military looking appearance, and who had just come from Porto Rico, underwent a seaching cross-examination, and I began to think he was to be walked off into the mountains. Fortunately he not only talked Basque well, but had considerable presence of mind, and after exchanging cigars with the second in command (the first was still struggling into his boots, one of which resolutely refused to go on), he was allowed to move about uninterfered with. No. 3 passenger was in sore trouble; he had about thirty umbrellas, and was required to pay two and a half reals for each, and also duties on some other articles, which he said amounted to more than their value. Senor de Churruca expostulated with the Carlists in their native tongue, while I reasoned with passenger No. 3 in French. His difficulty was very simple; the Carlists wanted more money than he had got, and he looked bewailingly at his broken boxes and soiled goods. I got him to offer about thirty pesetas, these were indignantly refused, violent gesticulation was indulged in, our driver now really taking active part on our side, but occasionally breaking off and running up to the top of the nearest hill, as though looking for some one. At last the guns were picked up and pointed at us, everybody talked at once, and it looked as if it would come to a free fight after all, when suddenly some cry came from a distance, at first faintly, then more clearly, and whether other prey approached, or whether the soldiers were coming the road we had left, I know not, but No. 3's pesetas were hurriedly taken, and this sample of the army of Carlos VII. hastily disappeared, leaving us the no pleasant task of repacking the luggage on the diligence as best we could with the cords which they had recklessly cut when too hurried to untie. Senor de Churruca stated that the Carlists claimed to have no less than 3,000 men well armed in the *Montanas de Arlaban*, round which

the road passed, of whom 500, they said, could be brought on the spot, by signal, in a few minutes. We resumed our route, pleased and disgusted—pleased at our lucky escape, and disgusted because the more than two hours and a half's delay would render us too late for the night express to Madrid."

When, finally, Bradlaugh reached Vittoria he found the town so crowded by soldiers and refugees that it was almost impossible to procure a bed. Next day he took the train for Miranda, escorted by nearly an entire regiment of soldiers. At Miranda two batches of Carlist prisoners were put in the carriages, including a lad not more than twelve years old. They were all to be sent to Cuba to fight against the Cuban insurrectionists.

After passing the rugged defiles of Pancorbo, and on approaching Burgos, more signs of the civil war were met—four or five railway stations had been burnt down. A long, weary night journey brought Bradlaugh near to Madrid, where he had a final reminder of the Carlists. Just after passing through a deep cutting in the rock near Las Royas the train pulled up with a sudden jerk and jump that threw the passengers off their seats. Leaping hastily out of the train to see what had happened, Bradlaugh found that the Carlists had placed some wood and iron across the rails, and had also turned an empty rubbish truck over, in the hope of upsetting the train. Fortunately the engine only was injured. Had the train gone off the line, certainly the majority of the passengers would have been either seriously hurt or killed. As it was they escaped with a shaking, and the more active among them, including Bradlaugh, at once ran up the hills on either side, and were not a little disappointed to find that the Carlists were gone. So great was Bradlaugh's indignation that he was longing for an opportunity of enforcing, revolver in hand, some of his notions concerning the perpetration of these useless acts of aggression on civilians.

Bradlaugh's first act on arriving at Madrid was to wait upon Senor Castelar, then the Minister of Foreign Affairs, by whom he was officially received, and to

whom he presented with all due formality, the Resolution of the Birmingham Conference. In due course, Senor Castelar wrote an official and amiable reply ; and then came an invitation to a State banquet organised in Bradlaugh's honor. This invitation was signed by the Alcade, Pedro Bernard Orcasitas, on behalf of the City of Madrid, by Francisco Garcia Lopez, the newly elected deputy for Madrid, by the famous Francisco Rispa Perpina, the President of the Federal Centre, by Juan N. de Altolaguirre, on behalf of the Republican Federal Centre, by Manuel Folgueras on behalf of the Provincial Deputies, and by a General and a Colonel commanding the Republican Volunteers.

At seven in the evening the Alcade came in person with a dozen carriages to the hotel to escort Bradlaugh to the place appointed for the dinner, the Café Fornos, where eighty leading Spanish Republicans had already assembled. The chair was taken by Senor Garcia Lopez, who received Bradlaugh with these words :—

"Caballero Bradlaugh, the Alcalde of Madrid, her Cortes Deputies, her *Diputacion Provincial*, her Councillors, the chiefs of her battalions of Volunteers of the Republic, the Presidents of the Popular Clubs, and the representatives of the Press—all members of the Spanish Federal Republican party—are those whom you see gathered here, and they thank you for the honor you have done them in accepting their cordial offer of a modest repast."

Then followed an eloquent speech explaining the prospects of the Republican party in Spain, and concluding with a toast to Bradlaugh and the English Republicans.

Bradlaugh replied in English, his speech being subsequently translated into Spanish by Senor Eduardo Benot, Secretary to the Cortes. It was this gentleman who, in his official capacity, signed, with his colleague, Senor Pedro Moreno Rodriguez, the authority for Queen Isabella and King Amadeus, the two last monarchs who abandoned the throne, to quit Spain.

In his speech, Bradlaugh answered an assertion of the *Epoca*, to the effect that he only represented an insignificant minority, by pointing out that all great reforms originated with a minority, and then continued :

"With pride instead of shame I admit, Senors, that it is the minority whose ambassador I am to you. To the minority I belong; and we are extending our small minority, so that I have little doubt that, within twenty years or less, we shall have the Republic in England (cries of 'Now, now') sending its official ambassador to the Republic of Spain. I trust, if I live, I shall then be able, on behalf of Republican England, to re-visit Republican Spain, and find her natural wealth developed, and the ancient glory of her name restored and maintained in a path of peaceful progress, useful to herself and to all mankind. I repeat, I shall be quite content if we have secured the Republic of England in twenty years.—(Here the speaker was again interrupted by cries of 'Now, now, at once.')—Speaking for myself, I may answer that if a Republic could come to-morrow in England, without force, without bloodshed, without crime, without ruined cities, and anger-maddened peoples, then I would be the first to greet it and to serve it; but our Republic will, I trust, come nursed by the school, the brain, the pen, and the tongue, and not heralded by the cannon's roar or carved by the sword. Hence, it is, that I say I should prefer to work, even for twenty years, to strengthen men's brains, so that they may know how to keep the Republic when they have won it, and that it may be an indestructible Republic, which shall honor the destinies of the people of England, and serve as guide as well as mother to the English-speaking races throughout the world."

When the loud cheers that greeted this speech were concluded, Senor Ocon came to Bradlaugh, and, after stating that he was the Secretary-General to the Council of Ministers, informed him that the Council had deputed him to add the congratulations of the Ministry to those he was then receiving. Senor José Christobal Sovrie, Minister for the Colonies, now sent his card and a present of Government cigars, for those at the banquet.

In answer to loud cries, the veteran Republican, Diaz Quintero, spoke next, and a number of other speeches were delivered. Finally, when the banquet broke up, Bradlaugh was escorted back to his hotel by all the guests, and then a series of deputations called upon him up till half-past two in the morning. In the street and the Puerta del Sol an immense but orderly crowd waited patiently from midnight till nearly three in the morning. During the whole of that time the two splendid bands of the Artillery and the Engineers,

sent specially by the Minister of War, serenaded Bradlaugh, concluding their concert with the Spanish Republican Hymn and the Marseillaise.

At last, and after repeated entreaties from the vast crowd, Bradlaugh was persuaded to address them a few words from the balcony of his hotel. He spoke in French, a language more likely to be understood than English, and said :—

"Peuple de Madrid, je regrette sincèrement que je ne puis pas vous parler dans votre propre langue, parceque touché au cœur par la démonstration que vous m'avez faite, j'ai besoin de paroles chaleureuses pour traduire ma pensée de reconnaissance. Je vous souhaite la paix, la prospérité, et l'ordre, et je crie de toute mon âme 'Vivad la Republica Espanola!'"

It was not till the first rays of the sun began to make their appearance that the crowd had finally melted away. In all, Bradlaugh must have shaken hands with something like eight hundred persons that day. Among the deputations he received were those from the 9th battalion of Republican Volunteers, a captain, a lieutenant, and six privates; twenty citizens del Districto del Hospital, headed by Senor Santiso, the editor of *La Judicia Federal*, on behalf of the Madrid Press; Senor Paz, Governor of Avila, on behalf of his city; a deputation of poor Spanish workmen from different towns, introduced by Senors Altolaquirre and Suarez; a deputation from the Madrid typefounders, and one other from the Madrid compositors; and, finally, a deputation from San Sebastian, introduced by its deputies to the Cortes.

During Bradlaugh's brief stay in Madrid he enjoyed several pleasant interviews with Senor Emilio Castelar, and many other prominent men, all equally desirous to do honor to the delegate of the English Republican party, and to welcome a leader whose ability and popularity has always been more readily recognised abroad than among the ruling classes in England. In this instance also it was the *New York World*, and not the English press, that gave the best account of these remarkable proceedings in the Spanish capital.

After all these demonstrations, it was urged that it would be most imprudent for Bradlaugh to return

homewards through the Carlists' country, and therefore he travelled across country by Alar del Rey, and, after some days' detention, succeeded in obtaining a ship from Santander to Bordeaux. The ship was not in the habit of carrying passengers, and Bradlaugh had to bivouac with tarpauling and sail-cloth spread on the iron bottom of the hold, and as he puts it: "Except that in the Bay of Biscay, the *Pioneer* sometimes suddenly put my head where my feet ought to have been, and then reversed the process with alarming sharpness, there was little to complain about."

CHAPTER XVII.

American Lecturing Tour—Unexpected Welcome—The Lotos Club—Charles Sumner and Lloyd Garrison—Wendell Phillips—An Old Friend—A Rough City—The Second Contest for Northampton—American Successes—The Third Contest for Northampton—Tribute from a Colored Senator—Hardships of Travel—A Third American Tour—Clerical Liberality—Illness—Welcome Home.

HOME once more to his humble lodgings in Turner Street, heavily laden with new honors, but still painfully encumbered with financial burdens, Bradlaugh came to the conclusion that he had not yet done enough to free himself from debts. His earnings, by lecturing and by writing, were considerable, and the greatest part was laid out in the payment of debts, but still the progress was slow, and there was the interest to be met, which made his payments amount to far more than twenty shillings in the pound. Fortunately, everywhere, excepting among certain classes of his fellow-countrymen, Bradlaugh's power, ability, and earnestness of purpose met with ready recognition. In America, more especially, the petty conventionalities that warp the judgment of the British bourgeois did not prejudice public opinion against Bradlaugh, and he had received many invitations to visit the United States.

Several American lecturing bureaux had appealed to Bradlaugh, and led him to infer that a visit to the States might be not merely a pleasant and useful, but also a remunerative experience. He reflected that, in such a venture he might find the longed-for means of freeing himself from debt, and at last he accepted the offers of the Cooper Institute of New York, which undertook, for a commission of ten per cent., to obtain almost unlimited lecturing work for him through the

States. Thus it was that, in September, 1873, Bradlaugh took passage on board the "Scotia" for New York.

Great was the excitement and manifold the expressions of sympathy among the Secularists at the departure of their militant chief. A farewell *soirée* was organised at the Hall of Science, addresses and deputations came from different parts, and Bradlaugh, perhaps, never so well realised the hold he had on the hearts of his followers as at the moment when he was about to leave them.

The passage was stormy, but Bradlaugh met an unexpected welcome on landing. In spite of the severity of the New York Customs, Bradlaugh had barely presented his written declaration as to his luggage, when the officer said: "Mr. Bradlaugh, we know you here, and the least we can do for you is to pass you through comfortably." Accordingly, the mystic chalk sign was scrawled over his boxes and parcels, and he at once found himself, without further trouble, launched into the streets of New Jersey, to become the ready prey of competing cabmen.

Other signs were not wanting to show Bradlaugh that his advent in the States would not pass unnoticed. On arriving at Fifth Avenue Hotel, he had barely time to change and lunch before the interviewer of the *Sun* was introduced, who was soon followed by the reporters of the *New York Herald* and *Tribune*. These papers devoted several columns to the description—personal, biographical, and political—of Bradlaugh; the *Herald* putting to its article, as a sensational heading: "Charles Bradlaugh, the future President of England, at the Fifth Avenue Hotel." The *Tribune* concluded its description by saying: "In a crisis the world would probably hear a great deal more of Charles Bradlaugh. As Mirabeau observed of Robespierre, 'This man will do something; he believes every word he says!'"

At the same time, there were many newspapers, more especially those representing some religious clique, that did not fail to vilify Bradlaugh. In the *Newark Morning Register* he was described as "a pestilent fellow," who wished to have "an unlimited number of heads

royal or semi-royal, elevated upon pikestaffs, or grinning from London Bridge." These gentle effusions did not, of course, produce any perceptible effect on the public opinion in Bradlaugh's favor. He was invited to dine at the renowned Lotos Club, where all the intellectual celebrities of America are welcome, and where he met, among others, the President of the Club, Mr. Whitelaw Reid, editor of the *Tribune*, and the American humorist who adopts the name of Petroleum V. Nasby.

Bradlaugh's first lecture was delivered in the Steinway Hall. The chair was taken by Mr. Peter Voorhis, President of the Mercantile Library, the largest institution of its kind in America, if not in the world, and among the audience there were Mr. D. J. Croly, editor of the *Graphic*, and his talented wife, "Jenny Jeune," Colonel Alcott, General Kilpatrick, Andrew Jackson Davis, the famous Poughkeepsie Seer, Theodore Tilton, editor of the *Golden Age*, and Mrs. Victoria Woodhull, the editress of the *Woodhull and Clayflin's Weekly*. Ireland was represented by O'Donovan Rossa, Freethought in the Broad Church by Rev. O. B. Frothingham; humor and wit by Colonel Hay, author of "Little Breeches," and private secretary to the late President, Abraham Lincoln, Bret Harte, and Mr. Andrews; and poetry by Mrs. Hester A. Benedict. Cheered by his first success, and encouraged by these eminent men, Bradlaugh started on his tour, and visited so many towns that the space is wanting to mention all his lectures.

At Boston Bradlaugh was honored in a manner that was more than usually gratifying. Wendell Phillips, the "Silver-tongued Demosthenes of New England," as he is so often called, took the chair for him, and Senator Charles Sumner, although suffering from ill-health, was present, and encouraged Bradlaugh in a few appropriate words; while William Lloyd Garrison sat close by, cheering constantly. Of his success on that memorable evening, Bradlaugh wrote to his friends in England :—

"I need not remind my readers of William Lloyd Garrison's services to the cause of humanity. Wherever freedom is

believed in, his name will always be spoken with honorable mention. Dragged by a rough mob of slave-holding gentlemen, with actually a rope round his neck, he never flinched. Side by side with Wendell Phillips, he spoke during the abolitionist struggle, while revolvers were thrust menacingly in their faces. Citizens of a Republic, neither Phillips nor Garrison had ever been able to visit Washington, the seat of the Government; their lives would have paid the penalty. At last the day came; abolition was proclaimed and introduced by the Honorable Charles Sumner, whose blood had sprinkled the very floor of the Senate House, to baptise it to the new religion of equal rights; the two staunch champions of human liberty entered in triumph the Senate; its folding doors being flung wide open, and a grand shout of welcome honoring their entry. And these were the men who gathered round me despite of, or perhaps because of, the terrible prejudices sought to be aroused against me. As I made Garrison's eyes and lips cheer me, my heart warmed to my work, and when at the end, Charles Sumner, the trained spokesman of America, rose from his seat to pay tribute to my tongue, I felt that I could afford to forget many things which my enemies have written and said."

Nor were these mere friends of the evening: the acquaintance was maintained and improved; but death has done its worst, and America has lost its best citizens. With Wendell Phillips, Bradlaugh has not corresponded so much of late, for he had the misfortune to differ with him respecting the currency question. At Boston Bradlaugh also established links of the warmest friendship with the Hon. Joshua B. Smith, the colored senator.

On leaving Boston Bradlaugh's train ran off the lines near Nashua without doing much damage, and in the valley of the Merrimac he had his first gaze at the marvels of American foliage, and the variation of colors produced by the proximity of winter.

At Chicago Bradlaugh did not make so many new acquaintances, but he met a very old and dear friend. He was about to ascend the steps of the Lecture Hall, when a familiar voice struck upon his ear, which seemed to echo back soft memories, none the less dear, perhaps, because a quarter of a century old. The voice, however, was more familiar than the face: it recalled days of poverty and the romantic thoughts of boyhood.

Hesitating, Bradlaugh inquired whether it was not Hypatia, but he was mistaken. The interrogator proved to be her sister, Theophila. After all these years of separation, he found himself once more with the daughter of Richard Carlile, the brave, rough pioneer to whom England is in a great measure indebted for the freedom of the Press and of public speech. The old friend of Bradlaugh's boyhood, with whose family many a scanty meal had been generously shared, had now a comfortable home in America, but her present prosperity could not obliterate the memory of the past struggles.

In some respects Bradlaugh's journey to America was not fortunate. He arrived at a moment when the country was in a state of financial panic; then, on reaching Kansas, he met with an accident which impeded his movements; and finally, when he was staying at Kalamazoo, after leaving Chicago, he was compelled to return suddenly to New York, in consequence of the death of the gentleman who had charge of the lecturing arrangements. The *Kansas City Times* gave a characteristic description of Bradlaugh's accident, which is a good specimen of American provincial journalism :—

"Kansas City is not a smooth city. Its greatest pride is its thousand hills, precipices, and bluffs; and the main characteristics of its inhabitants are their lofty airs, loud tone, and agility. This style is natural; it is acquired by hopping and skipping from the top of one side-walk across a chasm or ravine to the end of the cat or bluff, a limited distance, or across the street, to a ledge or plank, which offers a temporary relief from acrobatic exercise.

"Bradlaugh is unused to Kansas City side-walks, and never having practised tight-rope dancing, or walking upon an inclined plane of forty-five degrees, found himself somewhat surprised on Thursday morning.

"He had just left the Broadway, or Coates' House, in company with General Lamborn, of the Kansas Pacific, and was about to cross Tenth Street, when he suddenly found himself falling; his feet slid down the inclined plank called crossing, which was covered with ice, and he fell. Mr. Bradlaugh is a large man, a heavy man, and had a great fear of falling on the edge of the pavement; he threw out his right hand and the full weight of his body came down upon his wrist. His

hand, unfortunately, struck upon some sharp substance, probably the edge of the side-walk or curbing, the keen, knife-like edge of which tore through the palm of his hand, inflicting a serious wound, reaching beyond the wrist, creating a painful but not dangerous hurt.

"This accident has postponed his lectures in Atchison, St. Joseph, and Lawrence. It is a merciful providence that the life of this great and good man was saved. Had he not saved his back at the expense of his hand, thousands of the poor and oppressed of Great Britain would to-day be in mourning, while the Royal House of Brunswick and the Tory aristocracy would be rejoicing over the providential removal of the Republican agitator."

Bradlaugh was barely recovering from this accident, and had enjoyed fresh triumphs at Boston, where he returned, when the news came of the sudden dissolution of Parliament by Mr. Gladstone. This broke up the whole scheme of Bradlaugh's American lectures; he returned in hot haste to keep his pledge, and contest the borough of Northampton. During his absence, Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. Foote, and Mr. Austin Holyoake did their best to maintain Bradlaugh's candidature in the face of much unfair opposition; but his cause was weakened considerably by his absence. The Tory reaction was also another source of weakness, but nevertheless, and though at the bottom of the poll, the result showed that Bradlaugh had gained ground. Mr. Phipps, the Conservative, came in at the head, with 2,690 votes; Mr. Gilpin, the Liberal, was the other member, with 2,310 votes; Mr. Merewether, the second Conservative, with 2,175 votes; Lord Henley, the former Liberal member, only 1,796; and Bradlaugh, 1,653.

Men in mine, pit, farm, and factory, suddenly appealed to, found funds to contest the seat for Bradlaugh in his absence; and, on his side, Bradlaugh was obliged to pay heavy damages in America for his breaches of contract incurred in thus hastening away. He had brought back with him, however, the friendship of many great men, besides those whose names have already been mentioned, notably Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Vice-President of the States, Mr. Wilson. Dr. Buchanan, Washburne, Blaine, Boutwell,

Rice, Loring, Weiss, Bartol, Miner, Howe, and Russell were among his supporters. The Chicago and Cincinatti journals show how warmly he was greeted in Taunton, Newark, New Haven, Topeka, Lawrence, Levenworth, St. Joseph, Worcester, Kansas, Scranton, Omaha, Marlborough, Rockland, Amherst, Fall River, and Buffalo.[1] Financially, equally good proof is given of his success. At Boston his fee for a lecture was 200 dollars, the highest fee he ever received was 300 dollars, and the average fee, counting all the small towns, was 120 dollars. His first journey, though so brief, and necessitating the paying of damages for broken engagements, enabled him, nevertheless, to pay off £1,000 towards his home liabilities. Unfortunately, the homeward journey was prolonged, and Bradlaugh did not reach Northampton till after the election.

If Bradlaugh made new friends in America he lost a very old and dear friend on his return to England. Mr. Austin Holyoake died very shortly after the elections. For the benefit of his widow Bradlaugh assisted in arranging for the purchase of the printing plant that belonged to him, and the establishment of a printing and publishing business, managed by Mr. Charles Watts, where the *National Reformer* was issued and Bradlaugh's other publications printed. Mr. Austin Holyoake's "Sick Room Thoughts," written when he felt his end approaching, and published immediately after his death, excited some interest at the time, and, as in the case of John Watts, tended to show that sincerity, rather than any special form of belief, ensures a happy end.

As the summer approached, Bradlaugh made arrangements to return to America and renew there the campaign he had already so well opened. But again he was unfortunate. The critical condition of Mr. Gilpin's

[1] Henry Ward Beecher wrote in the *Christian Union*:—"Many thousands in America who heard Mr. Bradlaugh's manly and masterly speeches will give him their best wishes in his fight which he goes back to wage for a seat in the House of Commons as Member for Northampton. We can conceive a future for England in which this man may play the part of a Patrick Henry or a Mirabeau."

health rendered the possibility of a vacancy occurring in the representation of Northampton more and more likely. Engagements had been taken for Bradlaugh in America to commence in the second week of October, and Mr. Gilpin died at the beginning of September; Bradlaugh seized the earliest opportunity of issuing his address to the electors and of holding a public meeting. At the show of hands an overwhelming majority testified to Bradlaugh's popularity, and at the poll, though but a few months had elapsed since the last election, Bradlaugh had made further progress. The Conservative candidate, Mr. Merewether, was elected by 2,171 votes, the Liberal, Mr. Fowler, had 1,836, while Bradlaugh came uncomfortably near with 1,766 votes, this too in spite of the most damaging slanders unscrupulously circulated against him.

The irritation caused by the defeat produced some rioting, which Bradlaugh at once quelled; but it broke out again after his departure the same evening to catch the first steamer to America, where he was overdue.

This second journey was most successful, and Bradlaugh not only lectured at a great number of places, but he found time to make many inquiries, to take copious notes which ultimately enabled him to produce one of the most practical and useful guides to emigrants ever published. At Boston, where Bradlaugh on his previous journey had already achieved so much popularity, a regular fête was organised in his honor. A number of speeches were made, some of the clergy even joining in the demonstration. The Rev. Dr. Miner, who is President of Tuft's College, spoke in most flattering terms of Bradlaugh's previous year's work and its useful results, and expressed his hope that nothing he might see or hear in America would in any fashion damp his ardor for Republican Institutions.

The Hon. J. B. Smith presented Bradlaugh with a handsome and complete set of Charles Sumner's works, and wrote these few simple words:

Dear Brother Bradlaugh,—Please accept the legacy that Sumner left to the world, from your friend,

J. B. Smith.

At the instigation of Mrs. Dr. Carleton, Mr. T. B.

Smith, the colored member of the Massachusetts Legislature, was persuaded to speak, and said :

"Madam, when I came I had no desire to speak, but Mr. Bradlaugh was the friend of one I loved, and I am glad to do it. Sumner worked and spoke for the black slaves; Mr. Bradlaugh works for the white ones. I do not know what fruit Mr. Bradlaugh's labors may bring by-and-bye. I can only hope the result may be worthy of his hopes and efforts. To-day I am the fruit of what Charles Sumner did."

The effect produced by this speech was indescribable ;—so terse and so admirably to the point were these simple remarks, and, above all, they gave a glorious proof of what an emancipated colored man could do, feel, and say.

Bradlaugh's travelling experiences were not always pleasant ; thus, on arriving at Delaware station, he found the engine of the train he intended to take lying a perfect wreck on the line. The boiler had exploded while the engine was stationary, blowing the body of the fireman a distance of nearly 125 feet. It fell a shapeless mass of crushed flesh and bones against the ticket office. Several persons, including the station-master, were badly scalded, and one of the cars was broken. This was not an agreeable commencement of a long journey ; the weather was also exceptionally unfavorable, and the train finally arrived at its destination five hours late.

When travelling from Milwaukee by a night part freight and part passenger train, Bradlaugh had a good opportunity of testing the cord system for warning the engine driver. This cord is often neglected when it is a mixed train, and hence, though the train actually came in two a few miles from Chicago, the engine and freight cars went on merrily without perceiving that they had left the passenger cars behind. Nothing, however, worse than delay resulted.

At Lynn, Bradlaugh was much troubled by a snowstorm, which not only prevented many people coming to the Lecture Hall, but made it difficult for him also to reach the place. Going from the railway station he was nearly blinded by the snow, and had to sit down twice to reflect on the uncertainty of human progress.

To sit down in snow three feet deep is not dangerous, but it is a little ridiculous. Bradlaugh was consoled, however—though he broke his umbrella and filled his gloves with snow in the effort—when he ascertained that the gentleman sent out to meet him, and whom he had missed, had been compelled to sit down three times.

At Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, Bradlaugh was regularly snowed up. One thermometer went down 45° below zero, while others were actually congealed. Of course Bradlaugh was assured that such weather was altogether exceptional, the "oldest inhabitant" declaring that he had never experienced anything similar. The trains impeded by the snow either came in late or not at all; and on one or two occasions Bradlaugh arrived in time to find that his audiences, after waiting an hour or two, had gone home.

Near Springfield, a rail, probably affected by the frost, snapped into twenty pieces; but Bradlaugh's train was not upset, though the next rail was driven away. Fortunately the impetus brought the train back again on to the line. This sort of travelling, combined with the severity of the weather, the exertion of lecturing, and the fact that Bradlaugh sometimes only managed to pass two nights in bed out of eight days, finally exhausted even his robust frame; and when, with the spring of 1875, he once more sailed homewards, the rest and relief were most welcome.

In the autumn of the same year, Bradlaugh again, and for the third time, returned to America. His journey out, in the "City of Berlin," was performed in seven days and eighteen hours, the swiftest ocean passage that had ever yet been recorded between the Old World and the New. On this last journey, Bradlaugh had to face in New England a stronger opposition, due to religious antagonism, than he had ever encountered before. The most bitter articles appeared against him in the *Congregationalist*, and the large sale, during the past year, of the pirated edition of Bradlaugh's anti-theological works, seems to have still further exasperated the religious bodies. Extracts from some of the strongest anti-biblical statements were sent round to

the Lyceum Committees, and produced quite a panic amongst the managers of the lecture courses, yet Bradlaugh's well-known heresy could be no novelty to them. Some of the clergy showed, however, exemplary liberality. The Rev. Dr. Lorimer and the Rev. Dr. Miller both invited Bradlaugh to lecture to their audiences.

On another occasion, while Bradlaugh was attending as a spectator at a woman-suffrage meeting, his presence was pointed out to the chairman, who happened to be the Bishop of Georgia, the Rev. Gilbert Haven. This High Church dignitary, uninfluenced by Bradlaugh's heretical tendencies, courteously invited him to mount on the platform and address the audience. After the treatment that Bradlaugh had experienced in England, at the hands of the English clergy, this was indeed a revelation.

It has been seen that the results of Bradlaugh's first journey were partially marred by his hurried return to England, in consequence of the general election; his second journey was affected by the second contest at Northampton, consequent on the death of Mr. Gilpin, which delayed Bradlaugh's departure; finally, the third journey was brought to a premature close by a severe illness, which nearly cost him his life. A bad attack of pleurisy, complicated with typhoid symptoms, laid him up. So grave was his symptoms that he had to be removed from the hotel to St. Luke's Hospital, at New York, where he met with unremitting kindness. Many American friends displayed the most delicate thoughtfulness towards the stranger, ill in their midst. Fresh flowers, sent in each day, cheered the sick room, and Dr. Fessenden N. Otis, one of the ablest physicians of New York, was in constant attendance. Dr. Leaming and Dr. Abbe, the hospital physicians, were also most kind; but when Bradlaugh recovered he was too weak to face the Western winter, and had to cancel his engagements in the states of Ohio, Iowa, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri, thus losing 7,500 dollars currency, or about £1,300.

On his return to London the Secular party, proud of his successes in America, organised a grand fête in his

honor, which included the delivery of an address welcoming his restoration to activity and health after so dangerous an illness, and the presentation of a purse of gold, containing £169 11s. 6d., subscribed by his partisans.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mrs. Besant—Theological Reading—Thomas Scott—Writing for the "Reformer"—Litigation—The Knowlton Pamphlet—Trial and Appeal—A Monster Petition—Inheritance—Bradlaugh's Daughters.

IT was at the period when Bradlaugh's life seemed divided between the Old World and the New, that he first became acquainted with Mrs. Besant. This lady had been married to the Rev. Frank Besant, who, through her influence, was appointed to the vicarage of Sibsey, near Boston, in Lincolnshire. In the preface to her work, entitled "My Path to Atheism," Mrs. Besant briefly alludes to the agonies of mind accompanying the gradual discovery that she could not believe in the religion it was her husband's mission to teach. Her heresy, as is so often the case, was based on a thorough and conscientious study of the Bible, and her inability to make the last chapters of the four Gospels agree gave the first blow to her faith. The trial of the Rev. Charles Voysey for heresy revived her doubts. Her theological readings had as yet been confined to devotional and historical treatises, and the only controversies with which she was familiar were those that divided Christians among themselves. Mrs. Besant had carefully weighed the points of difference between the Greek, Roman, Anglican, and Lutheran communions, and was well versed in the views of orthodox Dissenting schools of thought. Pusey's "Daniel," and Liddon's "Bampton Lectures" were the only works that suggested a wider field among her earlier readings.

When doubt was once excited, Mrs. Besant procured the writings of Maurice, Robertson, Stopford Brooke, McLeod, Campbell, and others; but, while recognising the charm of their style, she failed to deduce therefrom

any firm ground on which to base a faith. They, however, served as stepping stones, which, with the works of F. Newman, Arnold, and Greg, together with an effort to understand the creeds of Mahommedanism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, led Mrs. Besant further into the land of doubt. Then followed a study of the works of Charles Voysey, Theodore Parker, Channing, Scott's "English Life of Jesus," Spinoza, Mansel, Darwin, John Stuart Mill, and other scientific writers.

All this hard study estranged Mrs. Besant more and more from her husband, who, on the contrary, was content to remain in the old groove, and in the enjoyment of his living. The more Mrs. Besant leaned towards Freethought the more her husband's conduct rendered a separation indispensable, and a formal deed was drawn up and duly executed in 1873.

Alone in the world, separated from many a dear friend through her inability to profess what she could not believe, Mrs. Besant soon found a new, but a most excellent friend in Mr. Thomas Scott, of Norwood. This gentleman, after wandering all over the world—spearing salmon and hunting over the prairies with the Red Indians, studying various religions in the lands where they were practised, returned to England so as to accomplish what he conceived to be his duty.

Thomas Scott was an athlete, a sportsman, a hunter, a thinker, a reformer, and a heretic. To a magnificent physique he united great brain power; his intellect was as cultivated as his muscles, and the mighty hunter was a profound scholar. He was familiar with Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic, well versed in Rabbinical lore, and all description of eastern learning. Bishop Colenso, Inman, and many others submitted their works to Thomas Scott before they issued them to the world. He united to Republicanism and Freethought, the rare advantage of an independent fortune, and this he determined to expend on challenging what he conceived to be superstitious idolatry. Every month he issued a number of Freethought tracts and pamphlets. He was not a regular publisher, but dealt with the wealthier classes of the community, sending out catalogues on application, and supplying Free-

thought literature wherever he ascertained it might be read.

This well-known Freethinker died at the end of December, 1878; and Mrs. Besant, in writing a tribute to his memory, tells the story of her connexion with him in the following heartfelt sentences:

"But I, who owe so much to Thomas Scott, cannot close this brief, poor notice without a grateful word of thanks to this noble man, now dead. It was Thomas Scott who—then by the Rev. F. Besant's consent—published my first two heretical tracts, 'On the Deity of Jesus,' and on 'The Gospel according to St. John; by the wife of a Beneficed Clergyman.' It was Thomas Scott who, when I was cast out of my home for my heresy, and thrown on the world with a delicate baby in my arms, came forward—when all repulsed me—to give me help. It was Thomas Scott who, when I was utterly alone, when my mother was dead, when my friends' houses were closed against me, when I sold clothes and jewellery to buy food, gave me my first paid work. It was Thomas Scott whose house was ever open to me when my need was sorest; and he never knew, this generous, noble heart, how sometimes when I went in weary and overdone from a long day's study in the British Museum, with scarcely food to struggle through the day—he never knew how his genial 'Well, little lady' in welcoming tone cheered the then utter loneliness of my life. To no living man or woman—save one—do I owe the debt of gratitude I owe to Thomas Scott.

"But on this dead man's bier what wreath of homage can I lay? Only this poor flower of deep gratitude can I place upon his tomb. As I stood beside him, dead, whose face, living, had never shown to me aught but kindness, one earnest wish rose unbidden to my lips: may my life be lived as bravely and as loyally as was the life of this pure and noble man, and may my death be as deservedly peaceful as was his."

After the separation, Mrs. Besant lived at Colby Road, Norwood, so as to be near to Mr. Scott, for whom she ultimately did a considerable amount of work. When writing a pamphlet for Mr. Scott, "On the Existence of God," the purchase of a stray number of the *National Reformer*, containing an invitation to Freethinkers to join the National Secular Society, caused her to offer herself as a candidate for membership. She wrote asking whether a distinct profession of Atheism was required, and received the reply that

while the President considered that Secularism logically led to Atheism no such profession was required as a condition of admittance to the society. An interview followed for the discussion of the question, and though this was the first time he had ever met her, Bradlaugh was much impressed by Mrs. Besant's ability and learning, and his admiration for her talents was greatly increased when, a short time later, he heard her speak at the Co-operative Hall, Castle Street, Oxford Street, on Woman's Suffrage.

Feeling that in Mrs. Besant the party had acquired a most useful recruit, he invited her to write for the *National Reformer*, and so that this should not interfere with some literary work which she was then pledged to complete, he suggested that she should adopt a *nom de plume*, and she chose that of "Ajax," the warrior crying for "Light." While Bradlaugh was away in America Mrs. Besant, however, boldly following the example of Mrs. Law, launched out as a lecturer, and signed her articles in her own name; but her remarkable success as a writer and speaker soon brought upon her the greatest trouble and sorrow of her life.

Under the deed of separation, Mrs. Besant was entitled to the sole custody of her infant daughter, Mabel, with the proviso that the little girl was to visit her father for one month each year. On one of these visits, the Rev. Mr. Besant sought, by concealment, to retain the child permanently; and though Mrs. Besant, temporarily recovered the custody of her little girl, this led to fifteen months' bitter litigation. It was maintained that an Atheist ought not to have charge of a child, and in such a cause Bradlaugh naturally became the champion of the defence. Bradlaugh's acumen in legal matters, his extensive reading and knowledge of the law, and his practical experience, rendered his advice most valuable, and the Rev. F. Besant's action compelled Mrs. Besant to avail herself of the help which the leader of the Secularist party was ready to afford in a matter that deeply interested all Freethinkers. Hence, by reason of the work she was doing for the *National Reformer*, and in consequence

of this litigation, Mrs. Besant was in constant communication with Bradlaugh.

A little before this, a circumstance, the result of a pure accident, had greatly increased this intimacy. Mr. Charles Watts had succeeded Mr. Austin Holyoake as the publisher of the *National Reformer* and of multifarious Freethought literature. During the year 1875, he purchased some hundreds of stereotyped plates from the widow of the late James Watson, a man of whose respectability there could be no doubt. Among these plates there were the "stereos" of a pamphlet which had been published some forty years previously, entitled "The Fruits of Philosophy." No one had ever called the pamphlet into question, and its sale, if not considerable, had in any case never been opposed. Without even reading this little work, Mr. Charles Watts issued a new edition from the old "stereos" he had purchased; and it so happened that a man who was arrested at Bristol for selling improper things, and justly punished, had also among his stock a few copies of this pamphlet. This led, after forty years' existence, to a prosecution of the pamphlet.

The trials that ensued touched upon a delicate and controversial point, which it would be out of place to discuss in a volume of this description. The pamphlet was written by Dr. Charles Knowlton, and had it been proposed to Bradlaugh for publication he would, as he stated, have declined to issue it, not in consequence of the subject-matter, but because he did not like the style. When, however, the authorities took upon themselves to prohibit the book, he felt that freedom of opinion and the liberty to publish had been attacked. Much to his disappointment, his old friend and ally, Mr. Charles Watts, backed out of the difficulty, and abandoned the publication. He proposed to plead guilty, so as to escape penalty, and thus to publicly acknowledge that the publisher of Bradlaugh's paper and books had printed an improper work. Such a supposition was insupportable; and Mrs. Besant found herself equally compromised, for Mr. Charles Watts had also published several of her works.

The pamphlet advocated the doctrines of the Rev. Mr. Malthus, and added details similar to those that may be found in, for instance, the popular French work written by the celebrated Dr. Clement, which was officially registered, and its sale (colportage), at the price of only one franc, approved by the French Government. There was, Bradlaugh maintained, nothing wrong or improper in such a work—a point on which, however, opinions widely differ, and it is not the purport of this volume to discuss the question. In any case, if this book had been suppressed without a hard fight, many other, and infinitely better works, would have shared the same fate. For the sake of the liberty of the press, Bradlaugh resolved to fight the matter out; and as Mrs. Besant had become so closely connected with the work of the Freethought party, and had been elected one of the Vice-Presidents of the National Secular Society, she felt that it was her duty to participate in the dangers and toil of this new struggle for freedom. With the financial assistance of some of her friends, she was able to enter into partnership with Bradlaugh as Freethought publishers; and their first act, when they had secured premises in Stonecutter Street, E.C., was to issue a new edition of the Knowlton pamphlet.

Of this action they gave due warning to the City magistrates, stating exactly the hour and time when they proposed to issue for sale the incriminated work, and the police were the first persons to whom the pamphlet was actually sold. Bradlaugh had never been a bookseller before, and became a publisher on this occasion solely for the sake of vindicating the right of free discussion. Bradlaugh had often faced hard toil, but never encountered such persistent, wearing, anxious labor, prolonged over several months, as that which the litigation on this subject entailed.

The details of the trial are all of such recent date that they need not be recalled. Everyone is aware how Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant were arrested, confined for a few hours in the police cells under the Mansion House, how their attitude convinced all concerned of the honesty of their purpose, how they were sentenced

at the High Court of Queen's Bench to six months' imprisonment and £200 fine, not, as the Judge said, for what they had done, for they were "entirely exonerated" by the jury from "any corrupt motive," but because they declared in Court their determination to re-issue the book; how an appeal was made in the Supreme Court of Judicature and this hard sentence revoked, and how after this triumph Bradlaugh finally compelled his persecutors to restore the copies of the pamphlet which they had seized.

It is needless, also, to point out how the question, which had remained dormant for forty years, became the subject of universal discussion, and the pamphlet which, in Dr. Knowlton's life-time, had but a restricted sale, was now eagerly purchased on all sides and attained a high circulation. At the same time it is only right to add that Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant did not seek in any way to profit by this disturbance; they never advertised the pamphlet, except the first notice given to the police, or tried to push its sale. They issued, on the contrary, at the earliest possible date, a rival, and in their opinion, an infinitely better publication, which has now reached its seventieth thousand. Still, with respect to the Knowlton pamphlet, the jury proclaimed that the opinion was honestly held; there was nothing in the language, admitting the subject to be discussed at all, to which exception could be taken.

While these great trials were pending nothing of any particular importance occurred; but a short time before their commencement, Bradlaugh started an agitation against Royal grants, consequent on the Prince of Wales' visit to India, and Mrs. Besant undertook the management of a monster petition that was endorsed by 104,330 signatures, of which 102,937 were inscribed on the same scroll, a fact testifying to a strong feeling against royal extravagances, and the influence Bradlaugh possessed. His power for work was also greatly increased by his sudden and unexpected release from the pressure of debt. Mr. Henry Turberville, otherwise known as Henry John Blackmore, brother of the well-known novelist, Mr. Richard Doddridge Blackmore, died leaving a will substantially in favor of Mr.

Bradlaugh. Unfortunately there were several other wills, and no less than six different actions were instituted claiming the property. The different litigants, however, agreed to a compromise, which resulted in Bradlaugh's receiving, after paying law costs, a sum of £2,500. With this he was able to clear all his pressing debts, and make arrangements for the gradual and convenient liquidation of the remainder.

In a letter printed during the discussion relating to the will, Mr. Turberville said that he left his property to Bradlaugh

> As a slight testimony of my immense admiration of that most truly noble of the human race, who is so grandly content with poverty for the sake of truth, manifesting such admirable self-respect for the good of others; although, if he chose to become moody and sanctified, he might at once realise a large fortune, and touch the pinnacle of the highest (so called) dignities of the realm.

It was only after this inheritance that Bradlaugh left his modest lodgings in the East End. With his two amiable and highly accomplished daughters, whom, as Mr. Morrison Davidson says in his essay on "Eminent Radicals," to know is to respect, he took up his abode at St. John's Wood, within an easy walk from the house where Mrs. Besant was then residing. Bradlaugh's little family was in mourning for Mrs. Bradlaugh, who died after a prolonged illness, and his daughters, having nursed their mother devotedly, thenceforward made their home with their father. That quiet household should give the lie to those who pretend that in all Bradlaugh's teaching there has ever been the faintest touch of opposition to the purity of family life. No more thoughtful nor tender father ever guarded the lives of two motherless girls.

CHAPTER XIX

Recent Work—Jingoism—The Northampton Election—In Parliament at Last!

BUT little remains to be added to the biography of Charles Bradlaugh that is not familiar and still fresh in the memory of the public. For the last two or three years, his life ran in a smooth and even course, at least when compared to his previous existence. Bradlaugh was active in writing and lecturing; at one moment denouncing the Tichborne imposture, at another pointing out the useless folly of the purchase of the Suez Canal shares; now assisting the agricultural laborers, then addressing the miners, or acting as arbitrator in their disputes, or descending into the pits to see and watch the nature of their toil. Now and again he will be found splitting a lance with his old foes, the clergy; then hastening down to Northampton, to increase the strength of his party, to watch over every detail of the organisation for the next election; or venturing, even in London, to stem the fierce tide of Jingoism.

When Lieutenant Armit called a meeting in Hyde Park in favor of the Turks, the Hon. Auberon Herbert and Bradlaugh convoked an opposition meeting in favor of peace, which was well attended, and carried the resolutions proposed, but it was attacked at the termination of the proceedings by the Jingo roughs, with whom a free fight ensued. Bradlaugh was assailed with missiles of every description, and but for his great strength and courage might have been overcome. As it was, his left arm, with which he protected his head, was disabled, and erysipelas ensued. For three weeks his life was in danger; but, at the same time, it should also be stated that five of his assailants had to be conveyed to St. George's Hospital.

Gradually, however, the tide of opinion changed, and the re-action that ensued brought Bradlaugh in as Member for Northampton. Everything for the election had been admirably prepared, and this time, at last, the ranks of the Liberal party were not divided. But still there was some doubt as to the result, for Bradlaugh had to fight against fierce religious opposition. The clergy preached against him. An ultra-Protestant Missionary united with the leading Roman Catholic clergymen of Northampton to damage to their utmost Bradlaugh's prospects. A pious coachbuilder came all the way from Liverpool to oppose Bradlaugh. He printed at his own expense at least 10,000 bills against Bradlaugh; and, on one occasion, posted 8,000, an effort which must have cost him no less than £34 in stamps alone, and all this in the hope of preventing the return of an Atheist to Parliament. But these efforts were in vain. After twelve years' of patient endeavor, and four contests, Bradlaugh was, at last, elected. The figures were, Mr. Henry Labouchere 4,158 votes, Bradlaugh 3,827 votes. The Conservative candidates, Mr. Phipps and Mr. Merewether, obtained respectively, 3,152 and 2,826 votes.

At last the victory was achieved! Our Parliament, so rich in representatives of the monied classes, was now to open its doors, not merely to a man of the people, but to a man whose commanding ability would enable him to advocate the people's cause with force and eloquence that cannot be silenced. The president and organiser of the Land Law Reform League had reached a position where he would be able to make the opinions of this important association felt and heard. The president of the National Secular Society was now to be a law maker on behalf of those who had but recently been outlaws, and Bradlaugh, once the penniless boy orator, once a private in the Dragoon Guards, had, in spite of the opposition of every social force, exercised by the sectarian and religious elements throughout the country, gained the highest political distinction to which a gentleman can aspire.

Still this great triumph was destined to be overcast by a moment's doubt. The difficulty with respect to

taking the oath seemed to threaten Bradlaugh with the loss of his seat, but only culminated in raising his popularity, and demonstrating the hold he possessed on the affection of the people. When his seat was in danger, on one single evening more than a hundred and forty meetings were held in his favor throughout the country. The telegrams that poured upon Mr. Gladstone, as he sat that evening on the ministerial bench, all protesting against the proposed exclusion of Bradlaugh from the House of Commons, were so numerous that Lord Hartington on one side, and Mr. Herbert Gladstone on the bench behind, had to help the Premier to open and sort them. The floor of the House was literally covered with the buff-colored envelopes that had contained the messages, each representing hundreds of enthusiastic supporters. It had been said that no man, excepting Mr. Gladstone himself, has so devoted and large a personal following as Bradlaugh; and those who, on that evening, saw the Premier overwhelmed by the telegrams in his favor were tempted to believe that this assertion is no exaggeration.

Such a man, it was evident, could not be excluded from the House of Commons. Whatever were his opinions, Bradlaugh had entered Parliament by the will of the people, and nothing but the force of despotism could prevent his admission. The full strength of religious antagonism yielded before the sovereign voice of the electors, and on July 2nd, 1880, "Iconoclast" was allowed to take his place among the legislators of England.

party, and the sinking of minor and personal questions, with many of which I deeply sympathise, in order to prevent the return, in so pronounced a constituency as Northampton, of even one Conservative.

April 15th.—Mr. S. Morley, at Bristol, said, respecting this telegram: He made no reference to candidates, nor did the friend who wrote the telegram go into detail, but he advised union. Those who had known him all his life would believe that he viewed with the intensest repugnance the supposed opinions, both social and religious, of one of the candidates. Afterwards, writing to the *Record*, Mr. Morley said he deeply regretted his telegram. The *Weekly Dispatch*, commenting on Mr. Morley's conduct, said: Let the bigots who have taken him to task for his temporary aberration from the path of pharisaism make what they can of his pitiful excuse. Other people can only regret that a man so useful in many ways, both as a politician and a philanthropist, should show himself so narrow-minded. The *Edinburgh Evening News:* In their disappointment, the defeated party have eagerly caught at the election of Mr. Bradlaugh as supplying the most pungent taunt that can be thrown at their victorious opponents.

The *Sheffield Telegraph:* Bradlaugh is an M.P. . . . the bellowing blasphemer of Northampton.

Mr. Bradlaugh announces that he considers he is legally entitled to avail himself of the Freethinkers' affirmation, and that there is some reason to hope that other members will join him in that course.

April 17th.—*Sheffield Independent's* "London Correspondent" says: Tenets which constitute the religious faith of Mr. Bradlaugh are understood to constitute an insuperable difficulty in the way of his being sworn a member of "the faithful Commons."

April 29th.—Parliament opens, but Mr. Bradlaugh refrains from presenting himself until the opinion of the law officers of the Crown was taken on his right to affirm. This opinion was in his favor.

May 3rd.—At the table of the House Mr. Bradlaugh handed in a written paper to the Clerk of the House; on this were written the words: "To the Right

Honorable the Speaker of the House of Commons. I, the undersigned Charles Bradlaugh, beg respectfully to claim to be allowed to affirm, as a person for the time being by law permitted to make a solemn affirmation or declaration, instead of taking an oath. Charles Bradlaugh." Asked if he desired to state anything to the House, Mr. Bradlaugh said : I have to submit that the Parliamentary Oaths Act, 1866, gives the right to affirm to every person for the time being permitted by law to make affirmation. I am such a person ; and under the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869, and the Evidence Amendment Act, 1870, I have repeatedly, for nine years past, affirmed in the highest courts of jurisdiction in this realm. I am ready to make the declaration or affirmation of allegiance.

At the request of the Speaker Mr. Bradlaugh then withdrew, that the House might consider the claim, and Lord F. Cavendish, urging that it would be manifestly inconvenient that when any hon. member had applied to take his seat in the House, any unnecessary delay should intervene, moved the appointment of a committee of inquiry, which should lay before the House the material on which the House itself should found its decision. Sir Stafford Northcote seconded. Several other members spoke, and Mr. Beresford Hope said that the grievance of one man was very little compared with a great principle ; at present the House of Commons was only a half-hatched chicken. The committee was then agreed to.

May 11th.—Appointment of committee carried by 171 votes against 74, after a two hours' debate.

May 20th.—The committee report : "That in the opinion of the committee, persons entitled under the provisions of 'the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869,' and 'the Evidence Amendment Act, 1870,' to make a solemn declaration instead of an oath in courts of justice, cannot be admitted to make an affirmation or declaration instead of an oath in the House of Commons, in pursuance of the Acts 29 and 30 Vict., c. 19, and 31 and 32 Vict., c. 72."

The draft report, proposed by the Attorney-General, was to the effect that "persons so admitted," etc., *may*

be admitted, etc. This was lost by the casting vote of the chairman (Mr. Walpole), the other members of the committee voting as follows. Ayes: Mr. Whitbread, Mr. John Bright, Mr. Massey, Mr. Sergeant Simon, Sir Henry Jackson, Mr. Attorney-General, Mr. Solicitor-General, Mr. Watkin Williams. Noes: Sir John Holker, Lord Henry Lennox, Mr. Staveley Hill, Mr. Grantham, Mr. Pemberton, Mr. Hopwood, Mr. Beresford Hope, Mr. Henry Chaplin.

Mr. Bradlaugh makes a public statement of his position with regard to the oath. He considered he had a legal right to choose between the alternatives of making an affirmation or taking the oath, and he felt it clearly his moral duty, in that case, to make an affirmation. The oath included words which, to him, were meaningless, and it would have been an act of hypocrisy to voluntarily take this form if any other had been open to him. He should, taking the oath, regard himself as bound not by the letter of its words, but by the spirit which the affirmation would have conveyed, had he been allowed to make it, and as soon as he might be able he should take steps to put an end to the present doubtful and unfortunate state of the law and practice on oaths and affirmations.

"May 21st.—Amid a tumult of cries from the Conservative benches Mr. Bradlaugh goes to the table for the purpose of being sworn. Sir. H. D. Wolff objecting, the Speaker requested Mr. Bradlaugh to withdraw. He (the Speaker) was bound to say he knew of no instance in which a member who had offered to take the oath in the usual form was not allowed by the House to do so. Sir H. D. Wolff then moved that Mr. Bradlaugh should not be allowed to take the oath, alleging against Mr. Bradlaugh his repute as an Atheist, and his authorship of "The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick." Mr. Alderman Fowler seconded the motion, stating that he held in his hand a petition praying the House not to alter the law and the custom of the realm for the purpose of admitting an Atheist to Parliament. Mr. Gladstone, in the course of replying, said: "it was not in consequence of any regulation enforced by the authority

of this House—of a single branch of the legislature, however complete that authority may be over the members of this House—that the hon. member for Northampton presents himself to take the oath at the table. He presents himself in pursuance of a statutory obligation to take the oath in order that he may fulfil the duty with which, as we are given to understand, in a regular and formal manner, his constituents have entrusted him. That statutory obligation implied a statutory right." He moved that it be referred to a select committee to consider and report for the information of the House whether the House has any right to prevent a duly-elected member, who is willing to take the oath, from doing so. A long debate ensued, characterised by the fierceness with which Mr. Bradlaugh's admission to Parliament was opposed. Mr. John Bright, however, asked if the House were entitled thus to obstruct what he called the right of a member to take his seat on account of his religious belief, because it happened that his belief or no belief had been openly professed, what reason was there that any member of the House should not be questioned as to his beliefs, and if the answer were not satisfactory that the House should not be at liberty to object to his taking his seat? After two or three adjournments of the debate the Premier's amendment was virtually withdrawn, and a motion by the Attorney-General was carried to the effect that a committee should be appointed to report whether it was competent to the House to prevent Mr. Bradlaugh, by resolution, from taking the oath.

May 28th.—Committee nominated—twenty-three members.

Mr. Labouchere gives notice to ask leave to bring in a Bill to amend the law of Parliamentary Oaths, to provide that any member may, if he desire, make a solemn affirmation in lieu of taking the oath.

June 2nd.—Mr. Bradlaugh gives evidence before Select Committee, in the course of which he said: "I have never at any time refused to take the oath of allegiance provided by statute to be taken by members; all I did was, believing as I then did that I had the

right to affirm, to claim to affirm, and I was then absolutely silent as to the oath; that I did not refuse to take it, nor have I then or since expressed any mental reservation, or stated that the appointed oath of allegiance would not be binding upon me; that, on the contrary, I say, and have said, that the essential part of the oath is in the fullest and most complete degree binding upon my honor and conscience, and that the repeating of words of asseveration does not in the slightest degree weaken the binding effect of the oath of allegiance upon me." [It had been persistently represented that Mr. Bradlaugh had refused to take the oath.] "Any form that I went through, any oath that I took, I should regard as binding upon my conscience in the fullest degree."

June 16th.—The committee report that the compliance by Mr. Bradlaugh with the form used when an oath is taken would not be the taking of the oath within the true meaning of the statutes; that if a member make and subscribe the affirmation in place of taking the oath, it is possible, by means of an action in the High Court of Justice, to test his legal right to do so; and that the committee recommend that should Mr. Bradlaugh again seek to make and subscribe the affirmation he be not prevented from so doing. (Majority in favor of his being allowed to affirm—four.)

June 21st.—Mr. Labouchere moved in the House of Commons that Mr. Bradlaugh be admitted to make an affirmation instead of taking the oath, seconded by Mr. M'Laren. Sir H. Giffard moved a resolution seeking to debar Mr. Bradlaugh from both oath and affirmation. Alderman Fowler seconded, a man who did not believe in a God was not likely to be a man of high moral character. The majority of the people were opposed to an Atheist being admitted to Parliament. Many other members spoke. General Burnaby said the making of the affirmation by Mr. Bradlaugh would pollute the oath. Mr. Palmer said Mr. Bradlaugh had a legal right with which the House had no power to interfere. The Attorney-General said he had come to the conclusion that Mr. Bradlaugh could not take the oath, chiefly on the consideration that he was a person entitled to

affirm. Mr. John Bright said it was certainly open to any member to propose to take either oath or affirmation ; probably if Mr. Bradlaugh had had any suspicion that the affirmation would have been refused him, he would have taken the oath as other members take it—very much, he was afraid, as a matter of form. Debate adjourned.

June 22nd.—Mr. Gladstone said that the House, by agreeing to the amendment, would probably be entering on the commencement of a long, embarrassing, and a difficult controversy, not perhaps so much within as beyond the limits of the House, perhaps with the result of ultimate defeat of the House. The more he looked at the case the stronger appeared the arguments which went to prove that in the essence of the law and the constitution the House had no jurisdiction. In interfering between a member and what he considered his statutory duty, the House might find itself in conflict with either the courts of law or the constituency of Northampton. No doubt an action could not be brought against the House, but he was not so clear that an action could not be brought against the servants of the House. He was still less willing to face a conflict with the constituency. The House had commonly been successful in its controversies with the Crown or House of Lords, but very different was the issue of its one lamentable conflict with a constituency.—Sir Henry Tyler, with execrable taste, dragged in the name of the lady with whom Mr. Bradlaugh is associated in business. At last, by a majority of 45—the numbers voting being 275 and 230—another triumph against liberty was scored.

The *Christian World* regretted that some Nonconformists helped to swell the Tory majority. The *Jewish World* held it as a reproach to Judaism, that members of their community should have gone over to the party which once strove to detain them in bondage. In 1851, Mr. Newdegate protested against the idea "that they should have sitting in the House, an individual who regarded our redeemer as an impostor," and yet Baron de Worms voted with Mr. Newdegate for the exclusion of a man with whose tenets he disagreed. The

Whitehall Review headed an article "God *v.* Bradlaugh," and said the majority had "protected God from insult."

June 23rd.—Mr. Bradlaugh again claimed at the table of the House of Commons to take the oath, and the Speaker having informed him of the resolution passed the previous evening, requested his withdrawal. Mr. Bradlaugh thereupon asked to be heard, and after some debate the demand was complied with.

Mr. Bradlaugh spoke from the bar of the House, asking no favor, but claiming his right, and warning hon. members against a conflict with public opinion.

Mr. Labouchere moved, and Mr. Macdonald seconded, the rescindment of the resolution of the 22nd, which was lost on division.

Mr. Bradlaugh was then recalled and requested to withdraw from the House. Standing by the table, he said: "I respectfully refuse to obey the order of the House, because the order is against the law." The raging of the bigots and Tories recommenced. Mr. Gladstone declined to help them out of the pit into which they had leapt: "Those who were responsible for the decision might carry it out as they chose." After a sharp discussion Mr. Bradlaugh was, on the motion of Sir Stafford Northcote, "committed to the Clock Tower." In the division the numbers were 274 for and 7 against, the Radicals having left the House.

June 24th.—On the motion of Sir Stafford Northcote, Mr. Bradlaugh is released from custody, "not upon apology, or reparation, or promise not to repeat his offence, but with the full knowledge and clear recollection of his announcement that the offence would be repeated *toties quoties* till his object was effected."

June 25th.—Mr. Labouchere gives notice of motion to rescind the resolution of the 22nd, and Government agreed to give an early day for the discussion of the same.

June 28th.—Baron de Ferrieres announced his intention to move that the seat for Northampton be declared vacant, and that a Bill be brought in providing for the substitution of an affirmation for the oath at the option of members. Mr. Wyndham (Conservative) asked Mr.

Gladstone whether the Government would bring in a Bill to remove all doubts as to the legal right of members to make a solemn affirmation. Mr. Gladstone said the Government did not propose to do so, and gave notice for Thursday (1st July) to move as a standing order that members-elect be allowed, subject to any liability by statute, to affirm at their choice. Mr. Labouchere then said he would not proceed with his motion. On another motion, however, by the same member, leave was given to bring in a Bill for the amendment of the Parliamentary Oaths and Affirmations, which was read a first time.

July 1st.—After a futile attempt made by Mr. Gorst to show that Mr. Gladstone's resolution was a disorderly one, the Premier, in moving it, said—in the course of an extremely fair speech—that the allegation of members that Mr. Bradlaugh had thrust his opinions upon the House was untrue. His (Mr. Bradlaugh's) reference to the Acts under which he claimed to affirm had only been named in answer to a question from the clerk of the House. Sir Erskine May, in his evidence before the recent committee, stated that Mr. Bradlaugh simply claimed to affirm.

Sir Stafford Northcote admitted that when Mr. Bradlaugh was called upon to affirm he was not disrespectful, but firm. He opposed the resolution as humiliating to the House. Several members protested against any course for facilitating the admission of Mr. Bradlaugh. General Burnaby stated that in order to obtain "authoritative" opinions on the matter he had obtained letters or telegrams from the Moravian body, the Bishop of London, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Ossory, the Bishop of Ratho, the Archbishop of Dublin, the Bishop of Galway, and the Bishop of Argyle and the Isles, and the Secretary of the Pope, all of whom expressed themselves in the strongest terms against the admission of an Atheist into Parliament. Mr. Spurgeon, who was unfortunately from home, had expressed his opinion strongly adverse to it, and the Chief Rabbi—(loud laughter—although refusing to interfere with political questions, felt very deeply on the subject. (Laughter, and cries of "the Sultan," and "Shah.")

When the House divided the numbers were 303 for, and 249 against.

July 2nd.—Mr. Bradlaugh takes the affirmation of allegiance, and his seat.

During the struggle several hundreds of indignation meetings were held in London and the provinces, and petitions, letters, telegrams, etc., in immense numbers, poured in upon the Government and the House, in favor of Mr. Bradlaugh's rights.

July 2nd.—Mr. Bradlaugh gives his first vote, and was thereupon served with a writ to recover against him a penalty of £500 for having voted and sat without having made and subscribed the oath, the plaintiff being one Henry Lewis Clarke, who, as subsequently appeared, was merely the tool of the actual common informer, Charles Newdigate Newdegate, M.P. This writ was ready so quickly that, if not issued actually before Mr. Bradlaugh had taken his seat, it must have been prepared beforehand.

July 8th.—Mr. Norwood asks the First Lord of the Treasury whether, considering the Government declined to introduce a bill to amend the Oaths Act, it would instruct the law officers of the Crown to defend the junior member for Northampton against the suit of the common informer? Mr. Callan asked whether the Government would remit the penalty? Mr. Gladstone said no application had been received for remission of the penalties, and that his reply to Mr. Norwood must be in the negative.

July 14th.—Read first time in the House of Commons, a Bill "to incapacitate from sitting in Parliament any person who has by deliberate public speaking, or by published writing, systematically avowed his disbelief in the existence of a supreme being." It was prepared and introduced by Sir Eardley Wilmot, Mr. Alderman Fowler and Mr. Hicks. Owing to an informality the Bill could not come on for second reading.

The Rev. Canon Abney, of Derby, speaks of Mr. Bradlaugh as "the apostle of filth, impurity, and blasphemy."

July 16th. — Parliament indemnifies Lord Byron against an action, he having sat and voted without being sworn.

July 20th.—Sir Eardley Wilmot gives notice of moving that it is repugnant to the constitution for an Atheist to become a member of "this Honorable House." He afterwards postponed his motion.

At a meeting of the Dumfries Town Council, a member said: "If the law courts should decide that it was legal for an Atheist to sit in the House of Commons, he should feel it his duty to give notice of petition to Parliament to have the law altered; he would not allow Mr. Bradlaugh to go into a hundred acre field beside cattle, let alone the House of Commons."

The Rev. Charles Voysey writes, that he feels disgraced by the people of Northampton electing Mr. Bradlaugh, and declares that "most of the speeches in the Bradlaugh case in favor of his exclusion, strike me as singularly good, wholesome and creditable." He repeats the myth of Mr. Bradlaugh forcing his objections to the oath upon the House.

July 21st.—Sir John Hay, M.P., speaking about Mr. Bradlaugh at New Galloway, made a most infamous, cowardly, and uncalled-for attack on Mrs. Besant. The *Scotsman* refused to print the remarks, as "the language was so coarse that it could hardly have dropped from a Yahoo."

August 1st.—The *Nineteenth Century* prints "An Englishman's Protest," written by Cardinal Manning, personally directed against Mr. Bradlaugh.

August 24th.—Mr. Bradlaugh gives notice that early next Session he will call attention to perpetual pensions.

September 7th.—Parliament prorogued. Hansard credits Mr. Bradlaugh with about twenty speeches during the Session. (Mr. Newdegate told the Licensed Victuallers that Mr. Bradlaugh "had made one speech, and proved himself a second or third-rate speaker.")

January 6th, 1881.—Parliament reopens. Mr. Bradlaugh renews his notice as to perpetual pensions. Great interest in the question throughout the kingdom.

January 24th.—Mr. Bradlaugh makes a speech in the House of Commons against Coercion in Ireland.

January 31st.—Mr. Newdegate, speaking in the House, described Northampton as an "oasis in the Midland Counties."

February 4th.—Mr. Bradlaugh makes a speech against the second reading of the Coercion Bill, and concluded by moving that it be read that day six months.

February 15th.—Date of motion for inquiry into perpetual pensions fixed for March 15th. (When the day arrived, Mr. Bradlaugh, on an appeal from Mr. Gladstone, allowed the motion to be postponed, in order to allow Supply to be taken. 848 petitions had been presented to the House, with 251,332 signatures in favor of the motion.)

February 17th.—Mr. Dawson, M.P. for Carlow, said that Irish members were much indebted to Mr. Bradlaugh for what he had done on the Coercion Bill.

February 25th.—Mr. Bradlaugh made final speech against third reading of the Coercion Bill.

March 7th.—The case of Clarke *v.* Bradlaugh heard by Mr. Justice Mathew.

March 10th.—Mr. Bradlaugh brought before the House the case of the imprisoned Maoris.

March 11th.—Judgment in the case given, which was for the plaintiff, that he was entitled to recover the penalty, subject to appeal. Mr. Bradlaugh gave notice of appeal.

Mr. Gorst gave notice to move that Mr. Speaker issue his warrant for new writ for the borough of Nottingham [!].

March 14th.—Upon Mr. Bradlaugh rising to present petitions against perpetual pensions, signed by over 7,000 persons, Mr. Gorst rose to order, on the ground that the seat for Northampton was vacant. After discussion the Speaker called upon Mr. Bradlaugh to proceed with the presentation of his petitions.

March 15th.—At request of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bradlaugh postponed his motion for inquiry into perpetual pensions. (See above.)

March 23rd.—Mr. Bradlaugh moved the Court of Appeal to expedite the hearing of his appeal, and also

to expedite the trial of the issues in fact. The Court gave the appeal priority over other cases.

March 28th.—Mr. Bradlaugh made his last appeal in the House against flogging in the Army.

March 30th.—Appeal heard.

March 31st.—Judgment given against the defendant. Plaintiff not yet entitled to execution, but seat vacated, Mr. Bradlaugh undertaking not to appeal so far as the affirmation was concerned.

Mr. Bradlaugh again seeks the suffrages of the electors of Northampton.

April 6th.—The Tories serve notice on the Mayor not to accept Mr. Bradlaugh's nomination, which the Mayor disregarded. Mr. Edward Corbett nominated by Tories.

April 9th.—Mr. Bradlaugh re-elected by 3,437 votes to Corbett 3,305.

April 26th.—Mr. Bradlaugh, accompanied by Mr. Labouchere and Mr. Burt, came to the table of the House, and, "the book" having been handed to him, was about to take the oath when Sir Stafford Northcote interposing, he was requested to withdraw, in order that the House might consider the new conditions under which the oath was proposed to be taken. Mr. Bradlaugh withdrew to the bar of the House, and Sir Stafford Northcote moved that he be not allowed to go through the form of taking the oath. Mr. Davey moved, and Mr. Labouchere seconded, an amendment to the effect that where a person who had been duly elected presented himself at the table to take the oath he ought not to be prevented from doing so by anything extraneous to the transaction. Other members spoke, and Mr. Bright regretted "the almost violent temper with which some hon. gentlemen came to the consideration of the question."

Mr. Bradlaugh, speaking at the bar, claimed that his return was untainted, that it had not been brought about by the Liberal party, but by the help of the people, by the pence of toilers in mine and factory. He begged the House not to plunge into a struggle with him, which he would shun, Strife was easy to begin, but none knew where it would end. There was

no legal disqualification upon him, and they had no right to impose a disqualification which was less than legal.

Mr. Gladstone made a lengthy and fine speech in favor of Mr. Bradlaugh, the text of which was Mr. Bradlaugh's own words, given above, as to imposition of a new disqualification; on a division, however, the bigots again had it.

Mr. Bradlaugh again stepped to the table, and demanded the administration of the oath, refusing to obey the Speaker's order to withdraw. Sir Stafford Northcote asked the Prime Minister whether he proposed to offer the House any counsel. Mr. Gladstone said he should leave it to the majority to carry out the effects of their vote. Eventually the Speaker called upon the Sergeant-at-Arms to remove Mr. Bradlaugh, who during the debate had been standing at the table. Mr. Bradlaugh withdrawing with the Sergeant three times to the bar, as often returned to the table. After further passages at arms between Mr. Gladstone and Sir Stafford Northcote, the House adjourned.

April 27th.—Mr. Bradlaugh again found at the table of the House claiming to be allowed to take the oath. At the bidding of the Speaker the Sergeant-at-Arms again caused Mr. Bradlaugh to withdraw to the bar, where he remained during the discussion which followed.

Mr. Labouchere asked the Prime Minister whether he would give him reasonable facilities to introduce his Affirmation Bill; if so Mr. Bradlaugh would not interfere with the resolution passed last night.

Mr. Gladstone said the giving facility for that purpose meant the postponement of very serious and very urgent business, and he had no assurance as to the disposition of the House. He could not see his way to consent if it was to be an opposed Bill. After further discussion, however, Mr. Gladstone said it might be possible to test the feeling of the House by one or more morning sittings.

April 29th.—Mr. Gladstone announces the intention of the Government of bringing in a Bill amending the Parliamentary Oaths Act.

May 2nd.—The Attorney-General moved that the House resolve itself into committee with a view of his asking leave to introduce the Bill. Debate on motion adjourned to the 5th, with the view of fixing the time on the 6th when the discussion should be resumed.

Mr. MacIvor gave notice to ask the Prime Minister whether he was prepared to reconsider his decision of last Session, and will introduce "a short measure" for the partial disfranchisement of Northampton. (The question was never put.)

May 6th.—Further obstruction of the bigots.

May 10th.—After 1.15 a.m. the Government proposed a morning sitting for that day (Tuesday), to discuss the introduction of their Bill. Further obstruction, wrath, and bitterness, and the Government abandoned the intention to hold a morning sitting.

At the afternoon sitting a resolution was arrived at, which authorised the Sergeant-at-Arms to prevent Mr. Bradlaugh from entering the House.

Lord Selborne (Lord Chancellor), in reply to a letter relative to Mr. Bradlaugh and the oath, says equal justice is due to Christian and Infidel; he saw no possibility of refusing to afford by legislation to all who scruple to take the oath, the same option in Parliament as they have in courts of law, to make an affirmation.

May 25th.—Mr. Newdegate formally blocked the Bill, of which Mr. Labouchere gave notice, for indemnifying Mr. Bradlaugh against penalties for having sat and voted on affirmation.

June 19th and 20th.—The common informer's action tried at *Nisi prius* before Mr. Justice Grove. Verdict against Mr. Bradlaugh for penalty and costs. *Rule nisi* for new trial afterwards granted by Justices Grove and Lindley; this rule was made absolute by Justices Denman and Hawkins, but was set aside by Lords Justices Brett, Cotton, and Holker.

Mr. Bradlaugh appeals to the country. The country answers, numerous meetings—crowded, enthusiastic, and unanimous—being held.

Aug. 3rd.—Mr. Bradlaugh, acting on his right to

enter the House of Commons, is seized at the door of the House by fourteen men, police and ushers (Inspector Denning said ten), and roughly hustled out into Palace Yard, Mr. Bradlaugh protesting against such treatment as illegal. "In the passage leading out to the yard Mr. Bradlaugh's coat was torn down on the right side; his waistcoat was also pulled open, and otherwise his toilet was much disarranged. The members flocked down the stairs on the heels of the struggling party, but no pause was made until Mr. Bradlaugh was placed outside the precincts and in Palace Yard." —*Times.* Alderman Fowler was heard to call, "Kick him out." This he afterwards denied, but there is evidence that he did so. (Mr. Bradlaugh suffered the rupture of the small muscles of both his arms, and erysipelas ensued.)

Many thousands of people went up to the House with petitions, urging the House to do justice to Northampton and Mr. Bradlaugh.

In the House Mr. Labouchere moved a resolution condemning, as an interference with the privilege of members, the action of the authorities in expelling Mr. Bradlaugh from the lobby. This was rejected by 191 votes against 7; and a motion of Sir Henry Holland, declaring the approval of the House of the course taken by the Speaker, was agreed to without controversy.

At a crowded meeting at the Hall of Science the same evening, Mr. Bradlaugh stated that he had told Inspector Denning in Palace Yard that he could come back with force enough to gain admittance, but that he had no right to risk the lives and liberties of his supporters.

August 4th.—The *Times* declares, in an article favorable on the whole to Mr. Bradlaugh's claims, that the House of Commons was yesterday the real sufferer in dignity, authority, and repute. It says: "the question contains within itself the baleful germ of a grave constitutional contest between the House of Commons and any constituency in the land;" and "such a conflict can but have one conclusion, as all history shows."

The *Daily News*, in a similar article, concludes thus:

"Sooner or later it will be generally acknowledged that Mr. Bradlaugh's exclusion was one of the most high-handed acts of which any legislative body has ever been guilty."

The following unique paragraph from *The Rock* is worth preserving in its original form: "The question now is whether the Christian people of this realm will quietly allow clamorous groups of infidels, Radicals, and seditionists, by organised clamor, bluster, and menace, to overawe the legislature, and by exhibitions of violence—not at all unlikely, if permitted, to develop into outrage and riot—to cause an organic and vital change to be made in our Constitution and laws, in order that brazen-faced Atheism might display itself within the walls of the British Parliament."

Mr. E. D. Girdlestone writes: "If the present Cabinet does not secure your admission to the House in some way or other, I can only wish they may soon be turned out of office. I don't know what more I can do than say, 'Go on! and go in!'"

August 5th.—Mr. Bradlaugh's application at Westminster Police Court for summons against Inspector, for having assaulted him at the House of Commons on the 3rd inst. refused.

Mr. Bradlaugh confined to the house with severe erysipelas in both arms, resulting from the injuries inflicted. Attended by Drs. Ramskill and Palfrey. The latter, on August 12th, ordered his immediate removal from town, to prevent yet more dangerous complications.

August 13th.—Mr. Bradlaugh went to Worthing to recruit his health. Outside the station there, weary and exhausted, both arms in a sling, he was rudely stared at by a clergyman, who, having satisfied himself as to Mr. Bradlaugh's identity, walked away saying loudly: "There's Bradlaugh; I hope they'll make it warm for him yet."

The *Northern Star* (a Tory paper) suggested that Mr. Bradlaugh was malingering—"simply carrying on the showman business."

August 24th.—Sir Henry Tyler, in the House of Commons, attempts to discredit the South Kensington

department for allowing science and art classes at the Hall of Science. Mr. Mundella gives those classes great credit.

August 27th.—Parliament prorogued.

Further appeal to England.

January 9th, 1882.—The Earl of Derby, in a speech at the Liverpool Reform Club, says: "For my part I utterly disbelieve in the value of political oaths. . . . I should hope that if Mr. Bradlaugh again offers to take the oath, as he did last year, there will be no further attempt to prevent him."

February 7th.—Reopening of Parliament. Mr. Bradlaugh again attended at the table to take the oath, and Sir Erskine May, the clerk of the House, was about to administer the same when Sir Stafford Northcote, interposing, moved that Mr. Bradlaugh be not allowed to go through the form. Sir W. Harcourt, in moving the previous question, said the Government held the view that the House had no right to interpose between a duly-elected member and the oath.

Mr. Bradlaugh, addressing the House from the bar for the third time, begged the House to deal with him with some semblance and show of legality and fairness. He concluded: "I want to obey the law, and I tell you how I might meet the House still further, if the House will pardon me for seeming to advise it. Hon. members had said that an Affirmation Bill would be a Bradlaugh Relief Bill. Bradlaugh is more proud than you are. Let the Bill pass without applying to elections that have taken place previously, and I will undertake not to claim my seat, and when the Bill has passed I will apply for the Chiltern Hundreds. I have no fear. If I am not fit for my constituents they shall dismiss me, but you never shall. The grave alone shall make me yield."

When a division was taken there were for the previous question 228, against 286. Mr. Samuel Morley voted with the majority against the Government. Sir Stafford Northcote's motion was then agreed to without a division.

February 8th.—Mr. Labouchere, in committee of the whole House, proposed for leave to bring in a Bill to

amend the law of Parliamentary Oaths and Affirmations. The Bill was afterwards formally blocked by Mr. Molloy.

February 17th.—Mr. Labouchere asked the Attorney-General whether the resolution of February 7th had not vacated the seat? Sir Henry James answered that it had not.

February 18th.—Mr. Gladstone writes Mr. Bradlaugh that the Government have no measure to propose with respect to his seat.

February 21st.—Mr. Bradlaugh of himself takes and subscribes the oath, and takes his seat.

February 22nd.—Mr. Bradlaugh expelled the House of Commons.

March 2nd.—Re-elected for Northampton. For Bradlaugh, 3,796; for Corbett, 3,688.

March 6th.—On the motion of Sir Stafford Northcote the House reaffirms its motion of the 7th February, Mr. Gladstone supporting an amendment moved by Mr. Majoribanks, by which the House would have declared the desirability of legislation, for the purpose of giving members an option between oath and affirmation.

March 7th.—Lord Redesdale introduces in the House of Lords a Bill, requiring every peer and every member of the House of Commons before taking the oath or making the affirmation, to declare or affirm his belief in Almighty God. The Bill, introduced "from a sense of what was due to Almighty God," was afterwards withdrawn "in deference to Lord Salisbury."

To this date 317 petitions with 62,168 signatures had been presented against Mr. Bradlaugh being allowed to take his seat; while in favor of the same 1,051, with 250,833 signatures, had been presented.

The electors of Northampton petitioned to be heard at the bar of the House, but their petition was disregarded.

Mr. Labouchere's Affirmation Bill blocked by Earl Percy.

January 11th, 1883—Mr. Justice Field gave judgment that the privileges of the House of Commons

prevented Mr. Bradlaugh from obtaining any redress for the assault upon him on August 3rd, 1881.

February 15th.—Great demonstration in Trafalgar Square; from eighty to one hundred thousand people present. (*Evening Standard* says 30,000; *Daily News*, 50,000 an hour before the meeting.) Mr. Adams, chairman; Rev. W. Sharman, Jos. Arch, and Mr. Bradlaugh, speakers.

Opening of Parliament. (Mr. Gladstone at Cannes.) Government give notice for to-morrow for leave to introduce Bill to amend the Oaths Act, 1866. Sir R. Cross gives notice of opposition on second reading of same. Mr. Bradlaugh consents, with the approval of his constituents, expressed on the 13th inst., to await the fate of the measure.

February 16th.—Sharp succession of frantic speeches in the House of Commons by Mr. Newdegate, Alderman Fowler, Mr. Warton, Mr. Henry Chaplin, Mr. Onslow, Mr. Grantham, Mr. Beresford Hope, Lord H. Lennox, Lord C. Hamilton, Mr. A. Balfour, Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett, and Mr. A. O'Connor. Divisions: from two to three to one for Government. The Marquis of Hartington consents to adjourn the motion for Bill until Monday at twelve.

February 18th.—The *Observer* says that when Conservatives ask Liberals whether they really mean to alter the law for the purpose of admitting Mr. Bradlaugh, it is fair for Liberals in turn to ask Conservatives whether they really mean to maintain an admitted abuse and injustice for the mere purpose of excluding Mr. Bradlaugh.

February 19th.—First reading of Bill carried on division by 184 votes to 53; second reading formally fixed for that night week.

February 20th.—*Daily News* says Bill will be carried by large majorities, and will be regarded by the House and the country as the appropriate settlement of an unfortunate controversy.

The *Times* says the leaders of the opposition will not succeed in finally preventing the Bill from becoming law. Its real concern is that Mr. Bradlaugh has been

substantially in the right; that he has been unjustly excluded from taking the seat which belongs to him.

The *Morning Advertiser* thinks the Government may yet find it difficult to persuade the House to adopt the Bill.

The *Morning Post* justifies the irregular opposition to the first reading of the Bill, and thinks notice of the measure should have been given in the Queen's Speech. No measure had created more excitement or raised more indignation in the country, which desired to see it rejected by a decisive majority.

March 5th.—Appeal case Bradlaugh *v.* Clarke part heard before the House of Lords.

March 6th.—Case concluded; judgment deferred.

March 9th.—Action for maintenance—Bradlaugh *v.* Newdegate—tried before Lord Coleridge and a special jury. Henry Lewis Clarke, the common informer, swore that he had not the means to pay the costs, and would not have brought the action if he had not been indemnified by Mr. Newdegate. Case adjourned for argument of legal points.

March 17th.—Maintenance action argued; four counsel appearing for Mr. Newdegate. Lord Coleridge reserved judgment.

March 20th.—The Solicitors to the Treasury compelled Mr. Bradlaugh to pay the costs of the House of Commons in the action against the deputy Sergeant-at-Arms.

April 9th.—Judgment delivered by House of Lords in Bradlaugh *v.* Clarke. The judgment of the Intermediate Court was reversed, Mr. Clarke's action being dismissed with costs, and the respondent in this appeal ordered to pay costs of the same. The Lord Chancellor and Lords Watson and Fitzgerald concurred in this judgment; Lord Blackburn dissented, as did also Lord Denman, who, although not a law lord, took part in the judgment. (See below, April 12th.)

"From 2nd July, 1880, to the 9th April, 1883, two years, nine months and seven days of weary litigation, very hard fighting, fearful waste of time and money, and many sore disappointments. Court after court decided against me, and Whig and Tory journals alike

mocked at me for my persistent resistance. Even some good friends thought that my fight was hopeless, and that the bigots held me fast in their toils. I have, however, at last shaken myself free of Mr. Newdegate and his common informer. The judgment of the House of Lords in my favor is final and conclusive, and the boasts of the Tories that I should be made bankrupt for the penalties have now, for ever, come to nought. . . . . The days and weeks spent in the law courts, the harassing work connected with each stage of the litigation, the watching daily when each hearing was imminent, the absolute hindrance of all provincial lecturing—it is hardly possible for anyone to judge the terrible mental and pecuniary strain of all this long drawn-out struggle. To those who speak of the long continuance of this litigation it is perhaps necessary to recall that in no sense does any particle of blame rest with me. When, in 1881, Mr. Flowers, the magistrate at Bow Street, suggested that both sides should stay proceedings, I at once readily consented, but Mr. Newdegate's attorney and counsel absolutely scoffed at the idea. Later, when the case came before Mr. Vaughan, Mr. G. Lewis, at my wish, intimated to Mr. E. Clarke, Q.C., M.P., who appeared on behalf of Mr. Newdegate at Bow Street, that I desired to settle the case, for I was then very ill from the injury of August 3rd, and I would willingly have paid £200, or even £300, costs; but the Tories meant I should be bankrupt, and they would listen to no terms."—Charles Bradlaugh in *National Reformer*.

The *Daily News* says: This judgment is of the very greatest importance. It is indeed, so far as the pecuniary consequences of his proceedings go, a complete victory for Mr. Bradlaugh. All the actions brought, or intended to be brought, against him fall to the ground. The writs issued against him are waste paper. Mr. Clarke, or rather Mr. Newdegate, will have to pay the costs of this suit in the courts before which it has come, and Mr. Bradlaugh has nothing to fear from the indignant virtue or excited greed of the common informer. . . . . Mr. Newdegate's position is not altogether an enviable one. After a long and obstinate

struggle, and many successful strokes for the support of the faith by penalties, he has suddenly met at the last moment with an irreparable reverse. It is difficult to feel much sympathy with him in misfortunes which he has brought upon himself, and perhaps it would be premature to condole with him before the Lord Chief Justice has decided the case of Bradlaugh *v.* Newdegate.

The *Globe* says it is an untoward event.

April 10th, 13th, 14th.—Criminal trial for blasphemy before Lord Chief Justice in Court of Queen's Bench, Queen *v.* Bradlaugh, Foote, and Ramsey. The alleged libels appeared in the *Freethinker*. The prosecutor was Sir Henry W. Tyler, M.P., and the public prosecutor gave his fiat for the prosecution. Messrs. Foote and Ramsey were brought up in custody from Holloway Gaol, where they were serving sentences on another charge for blasphemous libels in the Christmas number of the *Freethinker* for 1882. The Lord Chief Justice consented to Mr. Bradlaugh's application to be indicted apart from the other two defendants. Verdict of the jury, "Not Guilty." The trial of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey postponed. During the trial of Mr. Bradlaugh, it appeared that the prosecution had unlawfully examined the account of Mr. Bradlaugh at the St. John's Wood branch of the London and South-Western Bank. The *Daily News* said: A discreditable prosecution, which, in its motive and spirit, was clearly persecution, has broken down. The *Times:* It has been a faulty move.

April 12th.—In the House of Commons, in replying to Mr. Labouchere, the Home Secretary read a letter from the Lord Chancellor in which the Lord Chancellor said: "If it had not been known that any opinion which Lord Denman had expressed would not have affected the result, a remonstrance would no doubt have been made."

In reply to Mr. M'Lagan, the Attorney-General announced that when the Affirmation Bill was being considered in Committee, the Government would be willing to introduce words which would limit its effect to members who may be elected after it has become law.

In the Lower House of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury, the recommendation of the committee on Parliamentary matters that the Affirmation Bill be "opposed to the uttermost," and that the bishops be requested to oppose it, was carried by a large majority.

April 23rd, 26th, 30th, May 1st.—Debates in House of Commons on second reading of Parliamentary Oaths Act (1866) Amendment Bill.

April 23rd.—The Lord Chief Justice gives judgment in Bradlaugh *v.* Newdegate (action for "maintenance,") in favor of Mr. Bradlaugh. Damages referred to official referee.

May 3rd.—Debate on second reading of Bill resumed. Division: for, 289; against, 292; majority against, 3.

May 4th.—Mr. Bradlaugh asks to be allowed to take the oath at the table of the House of Commons, or to be heard at the bar. Sir Stafford Northcote moved that he be not allowed to go through the form of taking the oath. Mr. Bradlaugh is allowed to address the House from the bar. Mr. Labouchere moved "the previous question," Mr. Gladstone seconded. Division: for previous question, 165; against, 271. Majority for Sir Stafford Northcote's motion, 106.

The *Times* says the introduction of the Affirmation Bill has vindicated the good faith of the Government. The *Daily Telegraph:* At the gravest risk of misconstruction, and indeed in the face of the bitterest and most unmerited obloquy, they have vindicated the greatest of the great principles which have guided the steps and ennobled the history of their party. The *Daily News:* The forces of bigotry and intolerance have triumphed. The *Morning Post:* We have won! The Commons of England, in the early hours after Ascension Day, have decided against the infamous Bill introduced by Mr. Gladstone, and have vindicated the claim of this country to be regarded as a God-fearing and Christian state. The *Scotsman:* The defeat is on all grounds to be regretted, and chiefly on the ground that it will promote an agitation in the country of which comparatively little has yet been seen. The *Echo:* What the Tories have won the country has lost, and though the loss may not be felt for the moment, it

will be seen after many days. The *Journal des Debats*, in concluding an admirable article, says: "we shall see, in a future nigh at hand, the results of this deplorable victory of intolerance and pharisaism."

The *New York Sun:* It is settled, then, that the House of Commons is willing to place itself on record as the most bigoted assembly that exists in any part of the civilised world.

May 31st.—Lord Randolph Churchill withdrew the motion of which he had given notice, the effect of which, if it had been carried, would have been to prohibit Mr. Bradlaugh from even taking his seat in a new Parliament without a special resolution authorising him to do so.

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